DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 392 951 CE 071 098

TITLE	Implementing College Strategic Plans.
INSTITUTION	Further Education Development Agency, London (England).
REPORT NO	ISBN-1-85338-400-3
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	161p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Further Education Development Agency, Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EH, England, United Kingdom (25 pounds).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accountability; Check Lists; Educational Objectives; *Educational Planning; Foreign Countries; *Institutional Administration; Institutional Mission; Management Systems; *Organizational Change; *Organizational Development; Postsecondary Education; Program Evaluation; *Program Implementation; *Strategic Planning; Technical Institutes; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	Action Plans; *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This document, which is intended for individuals responsible for planning and management at further education (FE) colleges, summarizes the factors that contributed to or obstructed implementation of strategic plans in 10 FE colleges in England and Wales in 1994-95. It presents key questions and illustrations that FE colleges can use for conducting self-assessments/team reviews of strategic plans and formulating action plans. Presented in the introduction are an executive summary, guidelines for using the document, and discussions of the model of organizational change known as the 7-S Framework and the role of strategic planning in FE colleges. Part 1 discusses producing a strategic plan and managing, monitoring, and reviewing its implementation. The remaining eight sections of part 1 use an adapted version of the 7-S model to categorize the identified factors: strategy, structure, systems, style, shared values, staff, and resources. Each section includes illustrations from the 10 colleges' experiences and key questions for purposes of self-assessment, discussion, review, and planning. In part 2, the key questions are presented in checklist form. Appendixes contain information about the project colleges and their objectives, acknowledgements, and seven references. (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 392 951

FEDA

Implementing College Strategic Plans

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S Bourne

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Implementing College Strategic Plans

The Further Education Development Agency would like to acknowledge the contribution of the former Further Education Unit to the research which forms the basis of this publication.

Price £25

© Further Education Development Agency 1995

Registered charity number: 1044045

Cover and text designed by Christopher Raven

ISBN 1 85338 400 3

Printed by Blackmore Press, Shaftesbury Dorset

Contents

Executive summary

Using this publication

The 7-S Framework

Introduction

Part one

1 **The production of the plan**

2 **Managing, monitoring, & reviewing implementation**

3 **Shared values**

4 **Structure**

5 **Systems**

6 **Style**

7 **Strategy**

8 **Staff**

9. **Resources**

Part two

Reviewing and action planning pro formas

Appendices

1 **Project colleges and their objectives**

2 **Colleges and acknowledgements**

3 **References**

Executive summary

1. The production of the plan

Some factors affecting successful implementation have their roots in the way in which the plan itself was produced either in the process of planning or the format and content of the plan.

Achieving coherence

The natural desire of faculties, departments and programme areas to 'own' their own plans, needs to be tempered by the need for the college to have a coherent strategic plan for the institution as a whole.

Clear objectives and targets

Implementation seemed more likely to succeed if the objectives were grounded in previous experience of what was realistic, and if targets were clearly specified. There was a tendency to avoid setting clear targets for change and development and instead to set vague objectives which maintained the status quo.

Involving staff

Staff need to be involved in planning and given appropriate support and training. Senior managers have the job of setting college-wide guidelines and priorities, and negotiating plans with middle managers.

Planning the implementation strategy

Implementation was more likely to succeed where the original plans were supported by detailed action plans, which linked strategic objectives with practical tasks for named individuals, and specified target dates for achievement.

2. Managing, monitoring and reviewing implementation

Colleges vary in the extent to which they make use of their strategic plans and operating statements:

Clear targets and responsibilities

Some strategic plans were supported by detailed action plans which specified timescales and identified responsibilities for individual members of staff. Such action plans supported implementation by enabling monitoring and review to take place.

Organising monitoring and review

Part of successful implementation was regular monitoring of progress. It was important that an appropriate timetable was set, so that problems could be put right in good time.

Responsibility for monitoring and review

Different strategic objectives may require the involvement of different staff. In some cases, special project groups may need be needed.

3. Shared values

Shared values enable the college to pull in one direction and so make progress.

Shared values underpinning the plans

Shared values, or the lack of them, can have a significant influence on the formulation and achievement of organisational objectives. It is important to share a common interpretation of the objective and the action that is required.

Creating shared values

Shared values can originate in the history and traditions of the institution; the style of the principal and key managers; and/or conscious efforts

4. Structure

Aspects of the existing organisational structure may be affecting the implementation of objectives in the college strategic plan.

Strategy calls for changes to structure

Aspects of the existing organisational structure can work against the implementation of objectives in the strategic plan. Difficulties may be caused by a lack of mechanisms enabling different groups to work together, or because new functions have emerged which have not been allocated to a particular post.

Delineating and allocating functions

The way in which functions have been delineated and allocated may be causing conflicts or confusion amongst staff and can block the effective implementation of objectives.

Imbalance

An imbalance in the structure can be caused as new functions evolve.

Effective structures for large colleges

Large colleges, with several campuses spread over a wide area, faced particular problems in implementing objectives which called for common systems and approaches across the college.

5. Systems

Several factors are currently exerting pressure on colleges to establish and operate effective systems across the organisation as a whole.

Establishing systems

Achievement of strategic objectives is likely to be affected by the extent to which the college has succeeded in establishing effective systems across the college as a whole.

Systems blockages

The implementation of objectives is often blocked by problems relating to college systems.

6. Style

Factors relating to style can affect the successful implementation of college strategic plans and operating statements.

Kinds of Style

Since style can affect the implementation of objectives, it is helpful to be aware of the characteristic style(s) operating at the college. To seek to change an unhelpful style, or to investigate its adverse effects, it will be necessary to identify its origins.

Productive or counter-productive styles

A positive attitude by staff or managers can bring about a positive result even when other circumstances are unfavourable. The opposite is also true. A productive style can be undermined by other factors, so it is important to identify what these are.

Consistency

Conflicting styles can prevent the development and implementation of a coherent strategy. On the other hand, amongst team members, complementary styles can strengthen the operation of the team as a whole. A consistent style may be a strength because people know what to expect.

7. Strategy

Failure to progress towards the achievement of strategic objectives can be due to the fact that the strategies for implementation have not been thought through.

Detailed analysis of necessary action

Some objectives prove difficult to implement because they have not been analysed and broken down into their component activities. Only when this has been done will it be possible to sequence and co-ordinate the various activities, and monitor the progress of implementation.

Workable and effective strategies
Effective strategies require analysis of the underlying 'problem' so that an appropriate means of tackling it can be agreed. Workable strategies will take account of the 6S and 1R framework, making imaginative use of the tools that are to hand. Effective implementation of a particular objective may require a change in college culture, and this will need to be addressed by the strategy.

Establishing baselines
Energy can be wasted and staff can be alienated if existing pockets of developments, relevant to the current objectives, are not recognised and built on.

8. Staff

Staffing factors influence the implementation of objectives in a variety of ways.

Staffing implications of objectives
Lack of progress in implementing objectives can be due to a failure to think through the staffing implications. For example, it is important to involve staff with the right skills, and to allocate responsibility for implementation to an appropriately placed member of staff. Failure to involve part-time and support staff in such activities as planning meetings, staff development sessions and quality reviews, can seriously undermine progress towards the achievement of objectives.

Resource constraints and staff morale

The effects of resource constraints on staffing decisions and on staff morale need to be considered. Alternative strategies may be possible.

Staff attitudes

The attitudes of staff can determine whether or not an objective is achieved. Some staff may feel that implementing new developments is not the most important aspect of their job. This is particularly difficult when resources are tight and it is not possible to give material encouragement or rewards to those willing to undertake new responsibilities.

Staff Development
For new initiatives to take root, it is usually advantageous to prepare the ground first, through staff development. Resource constraints have led some colleges to cut back on staff development and hence investment in 'product development'. The absorption of such activities into a lecturer's general workload, represents a considerable culture shift for many.

9. Resources

It is not only a lack of resources which can undermine or block the effective implementation of college objectives. Factors relating to resources can affect the achievement of objectives in a variety of ways.

Costing implementation
A lack of costing or identification of resource requirements for the implementation of objectives was identified as a weakness in college strategic plans by the Audit Office, in its 1995 report, *Managing to be Independent*.

Allocating resources for implementation

Implementation of objectives can, of course, be affected by a lack of resources. A lack of confidence that resources will be available for implementation also limits the scope of developments at the planning stage.

Resourcing strategies
Although spending power is an obvious advantage, the way in which even limited resources are used is also significant. Internal resourcing strategies can be used to drive or reinforce the implementation of objectives. The adverse effects of resource constraints need to be weighed carefully, so that strategies for damage limitation can be formulated.

Using this publication

This publication:

- summarises the factors that were found to have assisted or obstructed the implementation of strategic plans in ten colleges in England and Wales in 1994-95
- uses an adapted version of the 7S model of organisational change, to categorise the factors under the following headings:
  Strategy
  Structure
  Systems
  Style
  Shared Values
  Staff
  Resources
- presents the factors in the form of key questions, for the purposes of self assessment, discussion, review and planning
- provides illustrations from the experiences of the ten colleges involved in the project, as food for thought and a source of ideas
- includes a summary of the key questions in the form of pro formas, for the purposes of review and action planning

Users

This publication is intended for use by:

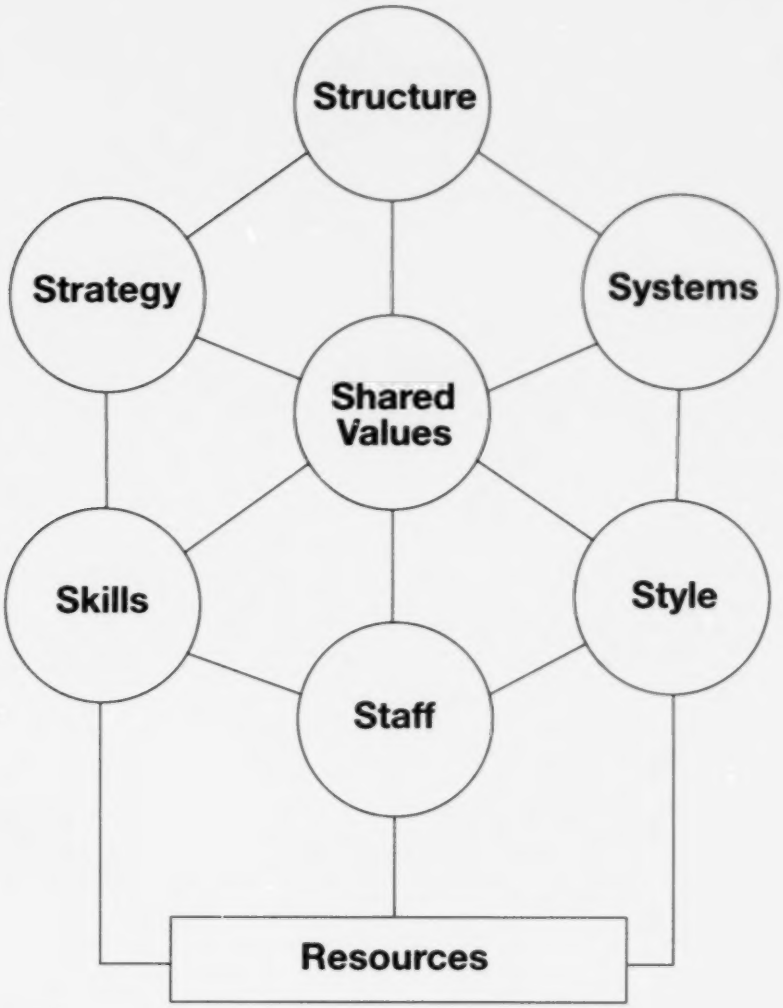
- college executives and senior managers, as teams and as individuals
- middle managers
- team leaders and teams

Purposes

It can be used for self assessment, team reviews, action planning:

- reviewing implementation of objectives in the current plan
- consideration of the full range of factors that may have affected progress, using the 7-S framework (see below)
- identification of reasons for failure and success
- diagnosis of problems, trouble-shooting, unblocking
- consideration of the experiences of other colleges
- discussion of strategies
- self-assessment: are we strong on some aspects and weak on others?
- planning for next time round: the strategic planning process; approaches to implementation

The 7S Framework



Adapted from the 7-S Framework Diagram, by Robert Waterman, Jr, Thomas Peters and Julien Phillips, p.18 'Structure is Not Organization', June 1980, *Business Horizons (June 1980)* Copyright 1980 by the Foundation for the School of Business at Indiana University. Used with permission.

This publication draws on a model of organisational change known as the **7S Framework** and described by Waterman, Jr, Peters and Phillips in 'Structure is Not Organization' *Business Horizons* (June 1980). Their central idea was that organisational change and effectiveness require interaction and balance between a number of related factors:

- Structure
- Systems
- Strategy
- Style
- Skills
- Staff
- Superordinate goals (Shared values)

'We find too many examples of large, prestigious companies around the world that are replete with strategy, and cannot execute any of it!' They claimed that the majority of organisations fail to implement their carefully planned strategies and achieve their objectives, because managers tend to concentrate on structure and systems, and to ignore the other variables.

They wrote 'A structure is not an organisation ... our assertion is that productive organisation change is not simply a matter of structure, although structure is important. It is not so simple as the interaction between strategy and structure, although strategy is critical too. Our claim is that effective organisational change is really the relationship between structure, strategy, systems, style, skills, staff, and something we call superordinate goals'.

It will come as no surprise that in using this 7-S model to identify factors which assist or obstruct the effective implementation of strategic plans in the further education sector, we found it necessary to add one further factor: **Resources**!

In preparing this publication we have grouped Staff and Skills together to form one category and renamed Superordinate Goals as Shared Values.

The resulting six S and one R categories do not represent water-tight compartments. The placing of some factors under one heading rather than another will be the matter for some debate. Some factors could equally be placed under several of the headings, and this has led to a degree of conscious repetition in the text, and the use of cross-referencing, where necessary.

Users of this publication may wish to use the 6 S and 1R framework to consider:

- In which aspects are we strongest?
- In which aspects are we weakest?
- Do we habitually focus on some aspects and ignore others?
- Are the pointers on our compasses all aligned?!

Are the pointers on our compasses aligned?

- 'The real energy required to redirect an institution comes when all the variables in the model are aligned. One of our associates looked at our diagram as a set of compasses. 'When all seven needles are all pointed the same way', he commented, 'you're looking at an organised company'. Waterman, Peters & Phillips, Structure is not Organisation (*op.cit.*).

Writing a strategic plan is one thing. Implementing it is no easy matter either! This was the advice from college principals and other senior managers, following the publication of the *Strategic Planning Handbook*, (FEU/The Staff College) in 1994.

Until 1 April 1993, strategic planning was the formal responsibility of local education authorities (LEAs) rather than individual further education (FE) colleges. Colleges have long been accustomed to an annual planning cycle, driven by the finances of central and local government, but before incorporation this only loosely linked funding to planned provision. The requirements of the (then) Training Agency; the need to produce work-related further education (WRFE) development plans, and to co-ordinate bids for funds from various government departments, the European Community (EC), local authorities and Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), all highlighted the necessity for colleges to clarify their own strategic objectives, even though a formal college strategic planning process may not have been in place. Before incorporation, however, planning had been focused on the need to match institutional objectives to the parameters of external sources of funding, and it addressed relatively short planning horizons.

The incorporation of colleges and the establishment of the Further Education Funding Councils (FEFCs) for England and Wales focused attention on the need for more formal strategic planning. Each college must interpret its environment and define its own role within that environment. It needs to have a clear view of how it intends to develop, and the means of securing that development. Comprehensive, co-ordinated, medium and long-term planning is called for.

Strategic planning is not new. Within the private sector - and in some colleges - strategic planning has been going on for many years. In business, a strategic plan analyses how the marketplace is changing, sets out what the business intends to do over three or five years, and indicates the financial implications of these changes in terms of an income and expenditure account, a cash flow statement and a balance sheet. The plan will show what risks they are taking and how these risks can be offset if, for example, the market does not turn over as the organisation expects. Although written plans are usually produced to back up applications for funding, the planning *process* is also recognised as a powerful tool for gaining the commitment of staff to the future direction of the organisation.

Planning in the FE sector shares many of these characteristics. However it also differs in several important respects. Unlike private businesses, further education institutions are not entirely free to make their own decisions about the services they will offer; curriculum bodies, validating authorities and funding bodies all have duties to discharge, determining the purposes for which public funding will be allocated. Moreover profit making is not the over-riding purpose of a college.

Sceptics might well ask what is the point of planning, since the future is so uncertain that factors which may prove highly significant, cannot be predicted. In part they are right: any college which slavishly follows its three- or five- year plan, regardless of changes in the outside world, is heading for disaster. But in the same way, a college which drifts along with no vision and no systematic analysis of the possible implications of its decisions is likely, sooner or later, to run aground.

The real point of rational planning is not to create a straitjacket for the future. It is to make sure that the decisions which have to be taken now, are taken with a clear aim in mind, assessed against the best available information about the marketplace, and based on sound strategic and financial analysis.

It is true that college strategic plans play an important role in relation to obtaining funds and providing external accountability. One of the criteria used by the Funding Councils to validate applications for recurrent funding is that the application is consistent with the college's strategic plan. Colleges are required to seek TEC approval for their plans. Inspectors use the plan as the context for their judgements about the quality of the college's service.

However, the strategic plan and the planning process can also act as powerful tools for effective institutional management. The process provides a focus for colleges to plan and develop their services. It can serve as a unifying framework for the work of staff and a means of making co-ordinated progress towards clearly identified goals. Operating statements can provide a means of monitoring implementation through the day to day operation of the college.

Not all colleges are succeeding in using the strategic plan and the planning process to benefit the college in this way, however, and failure to achieve objectives cannot be ascribed only to unpredictable external factors.

While acknowledging the relative inexperience of colleges in preparing strategic plans, the National Audit Office identified a number of weaknesses affecting achievement of a college's objectives, when it examined the accounts of FE institutions in the summer of 1994. The examination included visits to 15 colleges, a review of reports issued by the Funding Council's Inspectorate and Audit Service, and a review of the reports of two special enquiries carried out on behalf of the Funding Council(E). Overall the National Audit Office found that FE colleges had responded well to the challenges of independence, but that some weaknesses relating to strategic planning needed to be addressed.

These included:

- targets which were unrealistic or unrelated to the college mission or strategic aims
- lack of costing or identification of resource requirements for objectives included in plans
- lack of a clear relationship between departmental or other subsidiary plans and the college strategic plan, stemming from lack of guidance from senior managers
- weak or absent targets in non-curriculum areas in a few colleges

- absence of monitoring and review mechanisms for plans

Managing to be Independent: Management and Financial Control at Colleges in the FE sector. Report by The Comptroller and Auditor General, National Audit Office, HMSO January 1995

The FEFC(E)'s Audit Service reported similar findings. Some colleges' objectives were not linked to their strategic aims, or lacked targets or action plans for achieving them. Most significant weaknesses related to a lack of formal mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing plans.

Following the publication of the *Strategic Planning Handbook* and in response to the advice of the college principals and other senior managers, that they would welcome support on the implementation of strategic plans, the former FEU was already working on a new project: **The Implementation of College Strategic Plans, and the Effects on Practice**. (RP854)

This set out to identify and analyse the factors which were affecting the implementation of objectives, in the strategic plans and operating statements of ten colleges in England and Wales.

Each college was asked to select one or two objectives from their plan, for tracking purposes (see Appendix I). Members of the project team interviewed 'layers' of staff in each college, and sifted these perspectives in order to ascertain what factors were assisting or hindering the achievement of the specified objects. Some factors was tracked back to the way in which the plan itself was produced. The factors that emerged were categorised, using the 7-S Framework of Organisational Change (described by R. Waterman, T. Peters and J. Phillips, in 'Structure is not Organisation', first published in *Business Horizons*, Foundation for the School of Business at Indiana University, June 1980).

Although the sample of colleges included representatives from both extremes of the FE spectrum (large, merged, multi-sited general FE colleges; small, single-sited sixth form colleges), some common themes were readily identified. These themes concurred strongly with the findings of the National Audit Office and FEFC(E) Audit Service. The purpose of this publication is to use the experience of the ten colleges involved in the FEU project to provide a practical tool for addressing the weaknesses that have been highlighted.

In the event, unforeseen and perhaps unforeseeable external circumstances may render some aspects of the college's strategic plan irrelevant or otherwise impossible to implement. The authors of the 7-S Framework of Organisational Change wrote, 'When we turn to non-profit and public-sector organisations, we find that the whole meaning of 'strategy' is tenuous — but the problem of organisational effectiveness looms as large as ever'. The machinery of the organisation needs to be so well oiled that it can adapt to any factors that may arise.

The project team would like to thank the ten colleges which took part in the work, for their honesty and openness in sharing their experiences.

Sue Carroll

The sections which follow summarise the factors that were found to have assisted or obstructed the implementation of selected objectives from strategic plans in ten colleges in England and Wales in 1994-5. The factors are summarised under the headings below.

1 The production of the plan
2 Managing, monitoring and reviewing implementation
3 Shared values
4 Structure
5 Systems
6 Style
7 Strategy
8 Staff
9 Resources

Each section begins with a brief indication of the main lessons which emerged. The significant factors under each heading are presented in the form of questions for other colleges to consider, in their own context.

Brief illustrations are provided by quotations from interviews with college staff and by excerpts from the reports prepared following each college visit. These are marked with a ▫.

The key questions are collected and presented as pro formas at the back of the publication, so that other colleges can make use of them for the purposes of discussion, review and action planning.

See page vii *Using this Publication*

Some factors affecting successful implementation have their roots in the way in which the plan itself was produced:

either the process of planning

For example

- the degree and nature of staff involvement, including cross-college co-ordinators and support staff. More involvement makes the process more difficult to manage, but makes it much more likely that the plans will be implemented
- use of market information, which can be difficult to obtain but makes the plans more robust
- the level of detail in the action plans: if named staff are clear about what they need to do, it is more likely to happen

or the format and content of the plan

For example

- a clear relationship between college strategic objectives and faculty/departmental plans generates a shared sense of purpose
- cross referencing and co-ordination of linked objectives make it easier to see how college-wide plans will be realised
- objectives representing clear targets for achievement, with specific target dates, enable progress to be monitored
- costings for each objective demonstrate the plans are financially viable

Key issues in production of the plan

Achieving coherence

The natural desire of faculties, departments and programme areas to 'own' their own plans, needs to be tempered by the need for the college to have a coherent strategic plan for the institution as a whole.

1.1 **Is the plan**

- **a coherent strategic plan for the college as a whole?**

  or

- **a collection of separate plans, produced by individual faculties, departments, programme areas?**

  - The process of strategic planning to set growth targets was designed to generate a 'melting pot' of ideas from the programme areas, which could then be compared with the college's needs analysis and overall targets. In practice, very little moderation of the area proposals was needed; they were setting realistic targets which added up to a coherent whole, across the college.

1.2 **Were the strategic objectives of the college as a whole used as the starting point for individual faculties, departments or programme areas to set their own objectives?**

or

Were the objectives generated by individual faculties, departments or programme areas, added together and 'moderated' to form a strategic plan for the college?

- The college strategic objectives are extremely broad, and did not provide a particular reference point for the consideration of new operating statements.
- The seven 'platforms' relating to the college mission and vision were used as a framework for developing three-year strategic objectives. However, the inter-relationship between the mission statement and its seven 'platforms', the three-year overview, and the one-year plan is not necessarily obvious, particularly to those not involved in the early stages, for example, middle managers. Inputs have been made to raise middle managers' understanding.

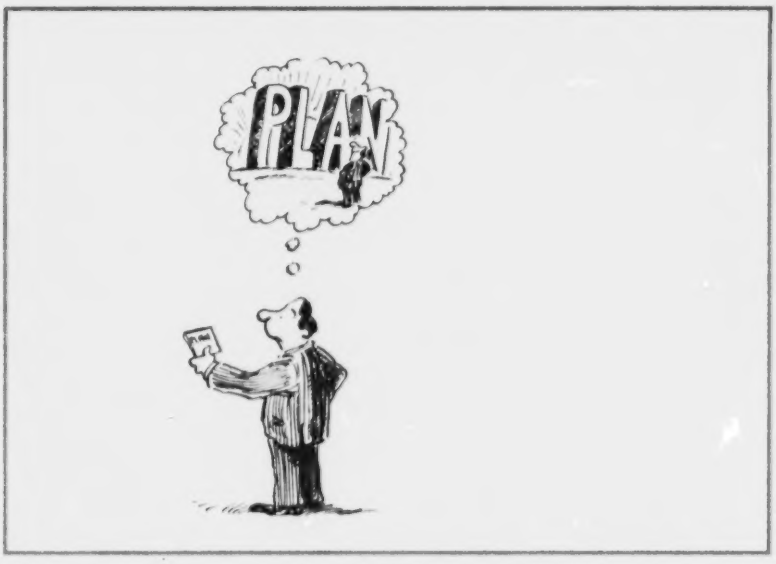
1.3 **Was the interplay between objectives considered?**

For example,

- **the knock-on effects of GNVQ expansion on A-level group sizes**
- **the effects of the objectives of one faculty or programme area on those of another**

1.4 **Did the plan signal all the significant developments which occurred or did some major changes come about which were not included in the plan? What were the reasons for this?**

- Although the plan was comprehensive, not all major changes were signalled through it. In particular, a major management re-organisation was carried out at short notice over the summer of 1994.
- The strategic plan objectives, as written, are an understatement of the plans which are in the heads of (or under discussion by) members of staff involved.



The strategic plan, as written, is an understatement of the plans in the heads of staff involved

1.5 **Is the plan seen as:**

- **an agreed schedule for action over a specified period, against which progress can be measured?**

  or

- **a 'live' and evolving document, which will be continuously revised and augmented in the light of reviews and in response to changing circumstances?**

A balance is needed between those decisions that can be made long term and ensuring that the college remains responsive within these. There is a need to accept that there will be some short-term failures.

Clear objectives and targets

Implementation seemed more likely to succeed if the objectives were grounded in previous experience of what was realistic, and if targets were clearly specified. There was a tendency to avoid setting clear targets for change and development and instead to set vague objectives which maintained the status quo.

1.6 **Were long-term or complex objectives:**

- **analysed into sub-objectives or action points?**
- **broken down into stages?**
- **clearly cross-referenced?**
- **phased?**

Successful implementation of the project on student retention will depend on:

- changing staff attitudes
- establishing cross-college systems and procedures for managing the student learning process from admission to exit
- focusing the induction process more on the curriculum
- putting resources into the physical support infrastructure (for example, childcare, open learning)

1.7 **Were there too many or too few objectives included in the plan? Was the level of detail appropriate?**

- There are probably too many minor details in the strategic plan. The three-year overview should focus on major strategic initiatives that will re-shape the college. The resources that will be required and how progress will be monitored need to be logged.

1.8 **Was the plan expressed in terms of:**

- **general directions for development**

  For example,

  investigate ...

  develop further ...

  enhance ...

  or

- **specific destinations**

  For example

  increase of eight per cent...

  establish a...

- The review group felt that the expression, or even avoidance, of targets through a discursive mode (such as to explore or investigate) seemed to have been used in some cases as a defence mechanism to cushion comparisons with peers, or to disguise any lack of progress. It may also have been used when a target was seen as desirable, but the means of achieving it were not known.

1.9 **Did the objectives state a commitment to achieving progress and change, or did they describe the status quo?**

For example

continue to provide...

1.10 **Did the plan represent the college's response to the outcomes of the market analysis, environmental scanning and research, or was it based on history and assumptions?**

See *Strategic Planning Handbook, FEU/ The Staff College 1994*

1.11 **Were base-lines for implementing objectives in different parts of the college established, as the starting point for drawing up action plans?**

For example

- **audits of current practice in different parts of the college**
- **audits of staff expertise, hardware available etc.**

1.12 **Do the outcomes of reviews inform the development of new objectives? Have timing issues been resolved in order to make this possible?**

- It is difficult to tie up the processes of reviewing and target setting because of timing issues. For example, with two year programmes, it takes three years to set the targets, recruit students, provide the programme and get the results, before we can check how accurate those targets were. So we feel as though we are planning in a vacuum.

1.13 **Did the plan address appropriate time frames?**

For example

- **focused too exclusively on immediate year ahead**
- **longer planning horizon needed for accommodation strategy (5-10 years?)**

Ideas for future development were seen in terms of the next year only. Staff were not encouraged to think longer term, i.e. two, three, five years ahead.

Involving staff

Staff need to be involved in planning and given appropriate support and training. Senior managers have the job of setting college-wide guidelines and priorities, and negotiating plans with middle managers.

1.14 **Did the strategic planning process undermine the development of shared values in the college?**

For example

- **failure to involve some groups of staff**
- **consultation which did not result in subsequent modifications, amendments, or additions to the plan**
- **inclusion in the plan of suggestions which were put forward as drafts, for discussion purposes, only**
- **failure to analyse what was involved and to support the implementation of the objective with a commitment to provide the necessary resources and staff development**

There had been confusion regarding the status of the planning and operating statements as 'draft', and the degree to which comments and contributions from both directors and staff could lead to changes. Perhaps due to a compression of timescales in June/July, operating statements which had been thought to be 'draft' appeared in the published plan. This led to some loss of faith in the process and meant that objectives were included which had not been fully thought through. Directors anticipate that, as a result, staff may be more diffident about making contributions on future occasions.

It seems that the 'draft' corporate objectives and college operating statements drawn up by the Senior Management Team were not open to amendment as a result of discussion by the directors or within directorates.

It had been agreed that operating statements would be discussed with staff and finalised during administration week, but the deadline was suddenly brought forward. Since this curtailed time for consultation with staff within directorates, there was a tendency to put forward relatively bland/uncontroversial statements.

- In some cases staff made comments which led to alterations in the operating statements. In other cases few comments from staff were received, perhaps due to a sense of alienation brought about by the contracts issue, or by a sense that their views would not make any difference.
- Some staff had commented on the alien/unreal language of strategic planning.
- In one directorate, meetings were held in each curriculum area. The broad operating statements were discussed and expanded, and staff development requirements were identified and added.

1.15 **To what extent and which were staff involved in the planning process?**

For example

- **heads of sections**
- **programme area leaders**
- **team leaders**
- **members of teams**
- **staff as individuals or through representatives**
- **cross-college co-ordinators**
- **cross-college teams**
- **support staff groups**

- The head of programme area (Humanities) thought that the programme area heads had been given a very large role in the development of the college plan, and as a result they are committed to the targets and actions identified in the plan. In his area, they carried out a course-by-course analysis of the market through a meeting of managers, completing two simple sheets provided by the head of corporate planning on growth potential in different student groups and segments, and identifying the resource implications for each course. These were then co-ordinated across the college through discussions between the heads of area, in which they negotiated a consistent approach which would meet the externally-driven college-wide targets.

1.16 **Were cross-college co-ordinators involved in the consideration of objectives and targets?**

- The framework for the generation of the plan has not changed, as it was felt to have worked well by those involved. However, participation in the 'away day' has been broadened to include staff with cross-college functions, such as the GCSE co-ordinator. Directors with cross-college roles have assembled *ad hoc* teams to undertake specific tasks.These teams have worked well, and have led to the embedding of major themes across college work.

- The planning process is based on divisions. The position of cross-college staff can therefore be difficult. The role of staff holding cross-college posts below the level of director, is being developed. At present their part in the planning process is uncertain.
- Pressures on colleges to expand, coupled with current developments affecting the curriculum (for example, GNVQs), call for a co-ordinated, whole-college approach. However, there seems to have been little or no emphasis on the formulation of cross-college objectives or developments, or the co-ordination of provision across directorates.

1.17 **Were support staff and teams involved in the planning process?**

- Support staff have been included in the whole process. Both teaching and support staff acknowledge the importance of this.

1.18 **To what extent do staff feel:**

- **'ownership' of the plan?**
- **committed to achieving the objectives?**
- **personal responsibility for achieving (or contributing to the achievement of) specific objectives? For example, do they have personal action plans?**

- The college has a well-developed strategic planning process which gathers systematic planning information from the programme area teams, following high-level guidance on targets from the executive team. The process was described by various staff as highly participative and consultative. Programme areas felt ownership of the targets set for them in the college plan and were therefore committed to implementation.
- The degree of openness and level of consultation have been very helpful in securing support from staff and in giving legitimacy to the process. However, not all staff chose to become fully involved. It was sometimes difficult to elicit active participation, and some people do not feel that it is within the scope of their jobs to contribute to overall planning. The process is taking place within a changing culture, where staff are slowly beginning to identify with the corporation and to accept the broadening of their roles.
- The external 'FEFC' target of eight per cent growth per year was known but not imposed, and in the event the college concluded that it could achieve nine per cent. This target was cascaded down to specific teams and managers, who had ownership of them because of the prior process, and accountability for achieving them through the Performance Managed Pay scheme.

1.19 **What support has been provided to enable staff to participate effectively in the strategic planning process?**

For example

- **frameworks for market analysis**
- **provision of information**
- **time for teams to undertake reviews**
- **clarity about the status of ideas put forward**
- **support for the implementation of proposals for new work (for example, resources, staff development)**

Staff commented that it is important and useful to have a say in generating new ideas, but that an agenda item in a review meeting is not the best way. Generating new ideas requires time to think, discuss, and plan.

The review group noted that detailed, precisely worded plans need not preclude 'good ideas'. These need to be recorded, investigated and developed until a decision can be made about whether the idea should be included in the plan. This could reconcile potential tension between entrepreneurialism and planning.

Ideas or contributions which are put forward as drafts for discussion by staff are sometimes taken and included in the plan as hard-edged and finished. This can inhibit future contributions, and causes difficulty when trying to implement something which has not been fully thought through.

For example, the Quality Assurance Indicators published in the plan were produced by the QA Co-ordinator, who thought he was preparing a draft for discussion. As a result the Quality section of the plan presents some difficulties as a document to work to and deliver, since there are some inconsistencies in it.

Staff were relatively unskilled in the process of writing and implementing strategic plans. This led to very different approaches being adopted by different parts of the college.

Implementation was more likely to succeed where the original plans were supported by detailed action plans, which linked strategic objectives with practical tasks for named individuals, and specified target dates for achievement.

1.20 **Were the plan and operating statements expressed in such a way as to provide a useful tool for managing, monitoring and reviewing implementation?**

For example

- **objectives broken down into component sub-objectives or action points**
- **realistic target dates**
- **responsibility/accountability for implementation allocated to a named individual, post-holder or team**
- **format, layout, cross references, etc.**

The format of the plan did not make clear the relationship between the strategic objectives and operating statements; for example, the relationship between individual directorate operating statements and the college's strategic objectives. A system of numbering and cross referencing would also assist in monitoring progress.

Objectives which were expressed in tight, precise statements, using direct, target-driven language allowed a degree of measurement and comparison of actual achievements with the objectives contained in the plan. Objectives which were expressed in vague terms proved more difficult to operationalise, monitor or evaluate.

Programme co-ordinators were glad to see objectives clearly set out. They thought that this would help to get things done.

The significance of operating statements varies from one directorate to another. In some cases, frequent reference is made to the operating statement, and links are made with review processes within the directorate. Operating statements are thought to be relatively hard-edged, with clear allocations of responsibilities, supported by bids for staff-development resources. This can galvanise staff. In other directorates, the statements were seen as pointers in a general direction rather than as fixed targets, since the unpredictability of FE were thought to militate against precise planning. In some cases the operating statements were perceived as bland, and it was thought that progress would be difficult to gauge as a consequence.

1.21 **Were responsibilities for sub-objectives allocated sensibly, in terms of the way in which the college operates?**

For example

systems, organisational structures, geography

1.22 **Were arrangements for co-ordination in place?**

■ An IT strategy has now been formulated, with an over-arching strategic aim and six associated objectives. An action plan to implement the strategy has been drawn up.

1.23 **Were the implications for implementation built into the plan?**

For example

- **resource requirements**
- **staffing and staff development requirements**
- **clear allocation of responsibilities**
- **target dates**

■ In some cases there seemed to be a lack of clarity concerning where responsibility is located; i.e. who is responsible for taking the initiative and delivering on a particular action point; who is responsible for providing support and supervision. This may result in the failure to initiate or co-ordinate action in order to achieve an objective.

■ A faculty-by-faculty action plan is to be drawn up, to address the strategic aim. This will be linked to targeted training, identified as a result of the audit of individual needs. A long-term rolling programme would be needed for real progress to be made.

... but the means of achieving the objective were not known ...

Managing, monitoring and reviewing implementation

Colleges vary in the extent to which they make use of their strategic plans and operating statements to provide:

- an agreed and explicit agenda for action towards the achievement of clear objectives
- a management tool for co-ordinating and monitoring progress
- a reference point for staff in planning and managing their work

The usefulness of the plan for these purposes will depend on:

- the specificity of the objectives
- the degree of analysis, which has been undertaken to ascertain the action that will be required
- allocation of responsibility and accountability for particular objectives to named post-holders or groups
- whether target dates for the achievement of objectives have been indicated. (See ***Part 1*** *The Production of the Plan*)

For some colleges the strategic plan is descriptive rather than aspirational, noncommittal rather than challenging, and prepared in order to satisfy external stakeholders rather than as a shaping and co-ordinating mechanism for the development of the college.

Colleges in England have been asked by the FEFC(E) to provide a brief assessment of the progress they have made towards the achievement of objectives set the previous year, when they submit their strategic planning information in July. Colleges are asked to indicate how the conclusions of their review have influenced their plans for provision in the succeeding year. *College Strategic Plans, 1995-6-1997-8*, FEFC(E) 95/17.

11

Key issues in managing, monitoring and reviewing implementation

Clear targets and responsibilities

Some strategic plans were supported by detailed action plans which specified timescales and identified responsibilities for individual members of staff. Such action plans supported implementation by enabling monitoring and review to take place.

2.1 **Is the plan seen as:**

- **a reference for managers and staff to co-ordinate progress towards specified objectives within stated timescales?**
- **an annual event?**
- **a dynamic ongoing process rather than a finished product? In this case, monitoring progress is as likely to result in modifications to the objectives themselves, as it is to revisions of the strategies for achieving them**

The college wishes to develop an action framework which ensures that the strategic plan is active rather than static. This will incorporate periodic review, modification in the light of events, identification of whole and partial achievements, local action plans and necessary college action against revised target dates.

A tighter, more frequent cycle of review and adaptation is demanded, so that the plan is really a working document to promote action, and is not perceived as just a monitoring instrument.

The erroneous sense of strategic planning being an annual event has tended to foster an HoD driven approach, when the role should be that of leader of a pro-active process of staff involvement.

The feeling that strategic plans are ongoing, developing documents is growing with the review process. There is less the feeling that the plan consists of a list of objectives that have to be achieved, and more a sense that new ideas can be recorded and developed, then added to the plan, or to next year's plan as part of ongoing developments.

2.2 **Have responsibility and accountability for each objective in the strategic plan and operating statement been clearly allocated, so that progress can be monitored?**

For example

- **to individuals**
- **individual staff action plans**
- **related to performance bonuses**
- **to teams/groups/committees**

Do staff feel accountable for particular objectives?

Do members of staff have individual action plans?

Do individuals and teams use the plan as a reference for their own work?

Individual and team targets are being agreed during the autumn through the programme area structure, in a cascading process from the top down. These targets are linked to a scheme of Performance Managed Pay in the college, whereby managers are rewarded for exceptionally good performance by bonus payments. These targets are developed from the strategic plan and accompanying operating statement.

- Allocation of responsibility to a named post-holder for each objective and component of the operating statement, instead of to a team or to a number of different post-holders, might provide a greater degree of clarity concerning accountability. However, since a number of factors beyond the control of an individual can affect the achievement of an objective, this kind of accountability would need to be set within the context of a sense of ownership of the plan (for example, involvement in the formulation of objectives), and a supportive review system.
- There was a clear appreciation of the purpose of the Retention Project and a high degree of commitment to achieving improvements. A request to identify what one member of staff needed to do to implement the project drew immediate reference to her own action plan.
- In their cross-college roles, staff interviewed were not aware of responsibility for any particular objective nor did they feel accountable for any particular objective. They reported that they did not refer to the plan in the course of their work.

2.3 **How are objectives which straddle organisational boundaries, monitored and reviewed?**

- The process of review was felt to be easier within a section, where the activity was discrete rather than in a situation that spanned sections. Not only did the consultation become wider, the factors influencing the targets multiplied.
- The directorate reviews of current operating statements were thought to have been effective in addressing concrete directorate issues, but it was felt to be more difficult to address aspects that relate to college systems and processes, since there are no obvious channels for this.
- Open Learning tutors are drawn from divisions (a policy decision so that practice is taken back into the divisions). This means a dispersed team. There is an annual whole team meeting of about 40 people to review progress. Such a meeting will take place around Christmas. Otherwise, progress will be reviewed through other teams to which OL tutors belong and will focus on objectives that are relevant to that team.
- Where there are a lot of different plans, the interaction between these can be difficult to hold clearly in view. There need to be mechanisms for co-ordinating these.

Organising monitoring and review

Part of successful implementation was regular monitoring of progress. It was important that an appropriate timetable was set, so that problems could be put right in good time.

2.4 **How frequently is progress in implementing the plan (one year plan/operating statements) monitored?**

For example

- **weekly**
- **fortnightly**
- **monthly**
- **termly**
- **annually**

2.5 **Does monitoring take place:**

- **on a regular basis?**

  For example

  as a standing agenda item

  at identified meetings

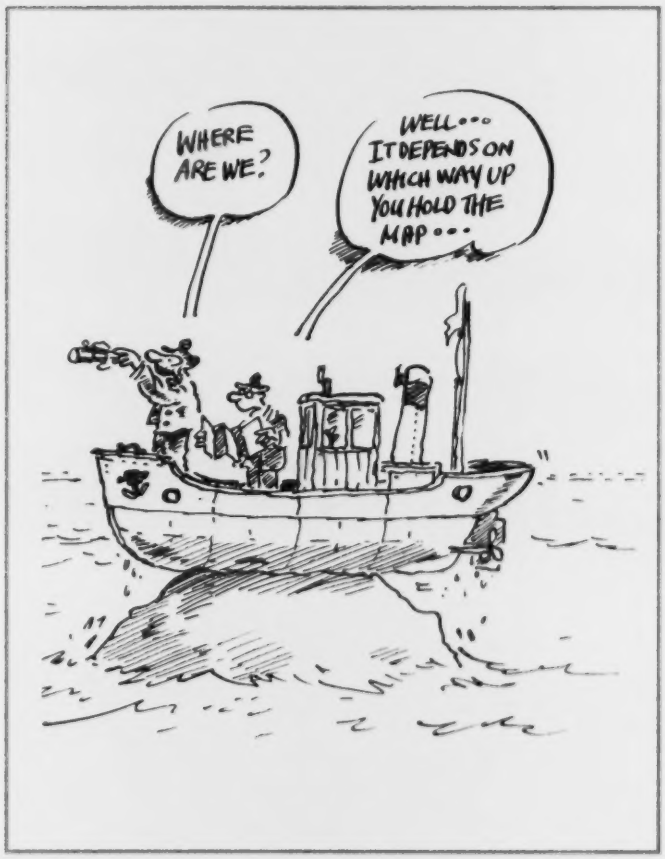
- **on an *ad hoc* irregular basis?**

  For example

  in response to events

  only when it becomes obvious that the ship is miles off course and about to run aground

  it varies from one part of the college to another.



monitoring only when it becomes obvious that the ship is miles off course

- Two updates of the annual operating statement have already taken place with a further one planned in January. Faculties are about to do their own update of the operating statement. An additional column could be added to allow progress to be noted.
- In some instances a review of the one-year plan will have been prompted by external factors. This has happened already in relation to staffing efficiencies, as the college has had to lose staff. Other external factors or unplanned factors might prompt a review; for example, franchised provision, changes in external contracts.
- Things tick over at the general faculty staff meetings (weekly, approximately two hours, timetabled).

2.6 **Do the outcomes of reviews inform the development of subsequent plans?**

- The vice principal (Curriculum) conducted his own review of the strategic objectives and prepared a summary of the key issues arising out of the directorate reports.
  The summary and directorate reports were discussed at an away day for the college board (principal, two vice principals, four curriculum directors, four senior tutors and the director of careers). The discussion was focused on curriculum planning. Other aspects still need to be considered. Action is already being taken in relation to some action points. Others will feed into new operating statements. All the action points from the review need to inform the curriculum planning process but timing is an issue. The problem is to complete the analyses quickly enough to inform the plan. Some aspects of the review process could be shifted back to the summer term, some are ongoing and some depend on when data is available, e.g. ALIS data.
- Excerpt from a college strategic plan.

Strategic objective	**Responsibility**	**Accountable to**
Further development of quality review and assurance process	Vice Principal	Executive
• refinement of quality **review** procedures		External Quality Review Board
•implementation of quality **audit** processes for cross-college activities		

Responsibility for monitoring and review

Different strategic objectives may require the involvement of different staff. In some cases, special project groups may need be needed.

2.7 **Who is involved in monitoring progress towards the achievement of objectives?**
Does monitoring take place:

- **through existing college structures and ongoing processes?**
  For example
  meetings of academic board committees
  team meetings
  line management meetings
- **through special groups convened for the purpose?**
  For example
  project teams created to implement particular objectives
  a committee of the academic board
- **at special meetings**
  For example
  faculty meetings

- Progress is monitored and formally reviewed at least termly. The Associate Principal (Curriculum) meets with the seven senior managers in his segment of the organisation, to review progress in relation to each relevant objective in the strategic plan and the sub-objectives set out in the annual operating statement. Key issues are identified so that these can be addressed and progress maintained.

2.8 **Does anyone have an oversight of the outcomes of monitoring?**

Curriculum directors and Support and Development Managers have their own plans. The VP (Curriculum) and VP (Support and Development) each meet weekly with their respective senior staff to oversee progress.

2.9 **What are the mechanisms for reporting and reviewing the outcomes of monitoring?**

For example

- **HoD reports presented at SMT meetings**
- **minutes of meetings sent to Assistant Principal (Curriculum)**

Is there a standard reporting schedule?

- **format, key headings**
- **cycle of dates**

Implementation is guided and reviewed by means of items on the agendas of meetings, including meetings of the Executive, Board, VPs and their senior staff, Curriculum Directors with Curriculum Managers. (for example, recruitment targets in curriculum areas).

Each curriculum director has a formal weekly meeting with the VP (Curriculum) as well as (periodic) meetings with the principal.

All staff are responsible for reviewing own plans.

Processes used to review plans could include:

- with cluster head (formal)
- with own divisional team (formal)
- through other team meetings (formal)
- with individual staff (formal/informal)
- with students (formally through representatives, or informally)
- with employees
- in response to unexpected events or changes (internal or external)

2.10 **Who is involved in reviewing the plan? (three year plan and one year plan)**

For example

- **college organisational structures,**
- **including support staff**
- **college consultative structures**
- **cross-college co-ordinators**
- **cross-college teams and groups**
- **students**
- **other stakeholders**

For example

- **parents, employers, community groups**
- **governors**
- **trade unions**

On the last morning of term, before Christmas, all directorates reviewed progress in achieving their operating statements, and considered the implications for next year. A pro forma was provided for drafting operating statements for the following year.
In most directorates, after an introductory session, staff split into curriculum groups to review the current operating statement and to generate ideas for the following year. The director and deputy directors went round the curriculum groups. Two deputy directors commented that the review had been 'positive but probing'. The opportunity for staff to tell the directorate of their achievements and concerns had been worthwhile and positive, in terms of recognition.

- The process began with a form of peer review, whereby directorates were paired. Each directorate presented a summary of their review, and answered questions from the paired directorate. An AP or VP acted as an observer for each group.The observers (members of the board of management, i.e. the college executive) had been instructed to pick out positive points for summary and reporting back to governors. Consideration of issues that needed to be addressed took place at a later date.

2.11 **Are standard reporting schedules used for review?**

For example

- **agreed format/process**
- **common key questions**
- **cycle of dates**

- As part of the college review process, all divisional and functional managers will be required to report progress in implementing their plans. This will be done through the appropriate college management team member and according to a standard reporting schedule.
- Each member of the college management team has responsibility for a section of the annual operating statement. He/she will be responsible for monitoring action, review and modification, etc., against a standard reporting 'schedule'. In all cases this will be set against the appropriate sections of the three year overview.
- Each academic division/function will adopt a similar approach and schedule for monitoring its strategic plan, 'reporting' through the appropriate member of the college management team.
- In spite of the advantages of a small team, there is a danger of not formalising review procedures enough. A formal, documented team review is probably needed.

2.12 **Is the college making the best use of monitoring and review processes?**

For example

- **for developing skills and confidence in strategic planning**
- **for developing and reinforcing 'shared values' amongst staff**
- **for gaining staff ownership of and commitment to the college objectives**
- **as part of the college quality assurance process**

Could the processes for monitoring and review be improved?

- The process of review has itself stimulated thought about the process of strategic planning; the language and method of expression; the relative roles of HoDs, cluster heads and staff; the frequency of the cycle. The review highlighted that:
  - the plan needs to be expressed in tight and precise statements. Where possible, wider long term issues need to be broken down into stages
  - cluster heads may need to give more time to the process and become more actively involved, though this should occur within the context of a bottom up approach
  - the process elements of the strategic planning cycle can form a very positive component in a team's work and identity.
- Much of the review process is verbal and consultative: these transactions and interactions are minuted for the record and to create an audit trail. All group members felt that the team-building benefits of sitting down with a team or section of the division to review their work has value far beyond the paper exercise.

- Processes need to be carried through and supported by senior managers. Some excellent practice by middle managers to keep the strategic plan under review was not followed through, in practice, by senior managers despite strong verbal endorsement.

- A group at one college prepared a report on the process of reviewing progress. They found that:

- Course team meetings focusing on specific initiatives were the most effective way of keeping the plan under review.
- Frequent reviews of this sort have made divisions more confident about the process of strategic planning, and more able to see the plan as a working document which might need modifying and within which certain objectives might not be attainable.
- Although there is still some feeling of the process being monitorial (from above), divisions are more confident and feel less defensive about failure to meet objectives.
- Staff involved increasingly get a sense of the college strategic plan underpinning activities, and that developments are not random. The plan is a reference for all activities and built into team activities.
- Regular meetings and reviews have changed the culture of meetings generally. They are seen as important and worthwhile, and an opportunity to pass information 'upwards'. (One head of division remarked he dared not be late since all staff were waiting at 9.00 a.m.).
- It can be useful to invite senior managers for specific topics. This was seen as an opportunity for direct access to SMT.
- With larger, dispersed teams the logistics were more problematic, but there were advantages in that there were wider opportunities for embedding.
- It is still very difficult to involve part-time staff and more frequent, active meetings make it unrealistic to include them.
- Staff are beginning to realise that vague language and targets will not be acceptable. Expressions such as 'will investigate' or 'look into' need to be more precise.
- The opportunity for HoDs to reflect with someone with another perspective would be valuable, especially if the process is to go beyond a monitorial one. This would add value to the process.
- The opportunity to reflect with other HoDs on the process of review within divisions has been valuable. Comparing approaches and outcomes had been supportive rather competitive.

Shared values enable the college to pull in one direction, and so progress.

Shared values are associated with:

- a shared vision
- a climate of trust
- assumptions about the ways in which others will interpret events, make decisions, react and behave
- confidence to express opinions and ideas
- openness about problems and confidence that shared solutions can be found
- a sense in which 'we're all in the same boat', 'we sink or swim together'

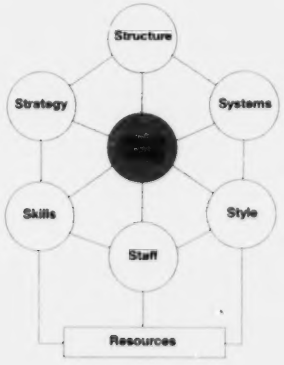
A lack of shared values is associated with:

- conflicting interpretations, paradigms, constructs
- disagreement about what needs to be done, why, and by whom
- suspicion about the motives and intentions of others
- uncertainty, apathy, diffidence about expressing opinions and ideas
- a tendency to hide problems or blame others

Shared values manifest themselves in:

For example

- the culture and style of the college
  For example
  - participative or autocratic
  - trust or suspicion
  - attitude to change
  - attitude to problems
  - formality, informality
- the way 'things are done around here'
- slogans, mission statements, straplines
- policy statements



19

Key issues

Shared values underpinning the plans

Shared values, or the lack of them, can have a significant influence on the formulation and achievement of organisational objectives. It is important to share a common interpretation of the objective and the action that is required.

3.1 **Are there signs that shared values at the college are supporting the implementation of objectives in the strategic plan?**

For example, is there evidence of:

- **a shared vision?**
- **a climate of trust?**
- **positive assumptions about the ways in which colleagues will interpret events, make decisions, react and behave?**
- **confidence to express opinions and ideas?**
- **openness about problems, and confidence that shared solutions can be found?**
- **a constructive attitude to change?**

The college has a very strong commitment, led by the Principal, to serving the local community and widening access to further and higher education; the slogan 'opportunity for all' was used by a number of those interviewed to exemplify this, together with references to the college's commitment to be 'client centred'. This lies behind a number of bold initiatives taken by the college in recent years, not least the radical introduction of flexible learning centres across the college. In terms of marketing, it has until now implied an entrepreneurial approach and a broad curriculum, identifying any needs and opportunities that exist in the community and attempting to meet them. This has successfully led to a high rate of growth for the college.

There is a strong sense of shared values and trust among staff. This is evidenced by the fact that although staff had not received a copy or summary of the plan, there was a general feeling that the plan would contain `no surprises or secrets' since information about developments would have been absorbed by a process of osmosis, through participation at meetings, staff briefings, etc.

'Faculty staff assume that money is being diverted from them to pay for cross-college services, which of course it is. However, we need to make them realise that they also have a share in the services.'

Although there was some apprehension when the central admissions service was first introduced, the faculty campus contacts for admissions seem to feel a sense of partnership with the admissions unit staff, and a common ownership of the system. There was an appreciation on all 'sides' of the problems facing the various parties involved, and of the complexity of the task. There was no blaming, and instead a sense of confidence and trust that the group would be able to address the issues and achieve solutions by means of the faculty campus contacts meeting and the joint review with the admissions unit staff.

'Unless people can interact freely, in an open climate, where they have the confidence to speak out, criticise, and make suggestions, a vast quantity of information that could give quality and competitive edge would be lost.' Course Director of Planning

3.2 **Has a lack of shared values affected progress in the implementation of some objectives?**

- The strategic objective is not well understood or internalised by the team. The objectives of the programme are not shared, nor can they be clearly articulated by all the team. There is no agreement about the shape, content or accreditation of the programme. Some members of the team perceive it to be much further advanced than others.
- Although there was a consensus amongst staff that retention rates needed to be improved, the findings of the retention project conflicted with staff perceptions of the reasons for student drop out. The report had been commissioned from an external consultant, and did not involve many college staff directly. College staff questioned the validity of the evidence, and the strategy that had been drawn up on the basis of the consultant's report.

3.3 **Have conflicting interpretations of problems led to difficulties in agreeing what action is required?**

For example

- **reasons for drop-out by students**
- **new staff contracts**

- An external consultant was commissioned to analyse the reasons for poor student retention at the college. The conflict between the findings of the report and the perceptions of lecturing staff concerning the reasons for the high drop-out rate has led some groups of staff to challenge the recommended strategy. They are questioning the basis of the evidence and the resource implications.
- The underlying project is about culture change, and the problem is how to make the project accessible to staff and involve them in its implementation. The culture needs to be changed from 'poor retention is someone else's fault' to 'could we support our students better'. This is not easy when staff were not involved in the original process of identifying the problems. To staff, it feels like external change is being imposed on them, rather than them choosing to participate. The only involvement of faculties in the project was through some of their students being included in the sample. Some staff have questioned the results and feel that their existing practices are as effective as they can be.
- To avoid defensive reactions, while retaining objectivity, it might be necessary in future, to involve more people in the audit process and at different stages. As people become more used to the audit process, they may find it easier to accept the findings. Curriculum directors need to encourage curriculum managers to collect their own data on an on-going basis including feedback from students. It would be helpful if all areas were involved in identifying appropriate indicators and targets, so that these could be used for self evaluation as well as by the college audit team.

3.4 **Have differing constructs led to strategies that will not work equally in all parts of the college?**

For example

- **concepts of the tutorial role**
- **concepts of APL (assessment of prior learning)**

- Not everyone shares the same vision. There is a discrepancy between concepts of the tutorial role, at all levels within the college. The split tends to occur along the traditional FE (vocational subjects) and 'tertiary/sixth-form college' line, reflecting the constituent parts of the merged college.

The tutorial role is at a different stage of development at the different campuses. There is a continuum between two different concepts of the tutorial role; (a) the 'dealing-with problems' model; (b) a learner-centred curriculum model. Both these concepts are operating at the college. It is therefore proving difficult to develop and implement a common system across the college, in keeping with our student charter.

3.5 **Have differing concepts of functions led to allocations of responsibilities, delineation of roles, the creation of systems and organisational structures which do not work?**

For example

- **concepts of marketing**

  - Although all the team share the general goal of improving the marketing of the college, there is no explicit agreement as to specific goals and methods of achieving them. It is not clear that all members of the team share a common understanding of what is involved in marketing the college and which skills members of staff need to develop. There is little evidence of a common approach to problem solving. Each member of the team has identified slightly different problems which they hope the strategy will address.
  - The focus of the strategic objective has been interpreted differently by different members of the senior management team. This has led to confusion regarding strategies and staff roles. College priorities and what the new post should be were perceived differently by different members of the senior management team. The mix of staff and skills needed had been thought out carefully but some differing perceptions among the senior management team had caused confusion.
  - The Executive Director (Marketing) sees marketing as wider than publicity and public relations. Her vision of marketing for the college means that everyone needs to be involved in the function, not just a marketing manager. The organisation of marketing at the college places PR in her responsibility but strategic planning (and therefore market analysis) elsewhere in the senior management team.

See *Section 4 Structure* and *Section 5 Systems*

3.6 **Is there evidence of:**

- **suspicion about the motives and intentions of others?**
- **a lack of confidence, inclination or interest in expressing opinions and ideas?**
- **a tendency to hide problems or to blame others, rather than to share in responsibility for finding workable solutions?**

  - The report prepared by the external consultant on student retention had not been widely disseminated yet. Staff thought this probably indicated that the findings were sensitive. They had only received a summary and not the full report (which included more detail) and so they challenged the bases for the recommendations. Since they had not been involved in the process of identifying the problems, they felt that change was being imposed on them.
  - 'Although staff may say they do not have time, (to implement new developments), the reason for this is the limitation on their weekly and annual workloads. People who only work 30 hours a week for 189 days a year, probably do not have time to undertake curriculum development, marketing, liaison with employers and other such activities.' (Principal)

- The report was presented to the College Board. The team acknowledge the limitations of the audit in their report. Nevertheless, it was felt that there was some 'shooting of the messenger'. By focusing discussion on and questioning the validity of the methodology, it was possible to avoid an open-minded consideration of the conclusions.
- There appeared to be a dilemma concerning the desire for objectivity in the quality audit process and the need for wider ownership and involvement in the process, so that the findings would be received with an open mind. As one curriculum manager put it, 'Inevitably, if you're not involved in something, you wonder if the findings are valid'.

See *Section 8 Staff*

Creating shared values

Shared values can originate in

- the history and traditions of the institution
- the style of the principal and key managers
- conscious efforts

  For example
  - to do things differently
  - use mission writing exercises
  - Investors in People

3.7 **Is the college operating in a way which fosters the development of shared values, and an appropriate culture?**

For example

- **well oiled communication channels**
- **access to information**
- **structures and systems that enable staff to:**
  interact with colleagues in other departments and sites
  interact with senior managers
  understand the points of view of other groups of staff
  contribute to the design of processes and systems
  participate in regular reviews and problem-solving activities
  undertake more than one role within the organisation
  establish common frameworks for activities across departmental or site boundaries

- The fact that there is a high degree of interaction between staff helps the college achieve its goals; for example, there are three adjoining staff rooms; senior tutors lead teams of staff from all curriculum areas, responsible for tutees from all curriculum areas.
- Despite the geographical spread, diverse origins and different campuses, there was a strong sense that staff belonged to one college rather than to a particular campus. Factors that would seem to contribute to this include:
  - the development of an infrastructure for cross-college services, by means of the establishment of 'central' appointments (for example, academic registrar, dean of student services), and faculty 'contacts' on each campus. These faculty representatives have a role in developing, implementing, reviewing and refining cross-college systems; for example, the tutor system
  - the establishment of a number of cross-college committees which aim to establish a whole college view on developments

- positive steps to promote attendance at meetings. Resources are provided for class cover, and meetings are held at different campuses so that members have a reason for visiting other parts of the college
- obtaining a whole college view on initiatives and developments as a priority

There was universal awareness of the strategic objective relating to IT. This had been conveyed in a variety of ways: by news sheet, at cross-college and faculty meetings, by attendance of the Staff and Curriculum Development Officer at meetings, by participation in training. There was a feeling that IT was a high priority in the college, and that it was supported by the senior management team, both in principle and by the investment of resources.

The SMT endeavours to ensure that staff are able to appreciate the environment in which the college is working and the issues facing it, for example, members of SMT provided presentations on the implications of the FEFC funding methodology for all staff, and these sessions were compulsory.

The principal holds regular surgeries and staff briefings at each centre. He also has regular sessions with senior and middle managers who then cascade with their staff. The intention is to ensure that everyone is saying the same thing.

Strategic plan dissemination sessions were provided for all staff, where senior managers went through the key points in the plan. This meant providing a session for cleaners at 5.00 a.m!

The college devoted considerable attention to the formulation of the 'vision, mission, values' of the college, and this constitutes a significant section of the strategic plan. Staff worked in groups to identify the things they were proud of and the things they wanted to improve. The resulting statements were distilled into a strapline: 'quality education in a supportive environment'.
The same college was able to report that although staff did not receive a copy or summary of the plan, they did not feel that the strategic objectives would hold any surprises. A copy of the strategic plan is lodged in the staff room.

We are endeavouring to shift our culture from political to rational.
from: *differentiation, dissonance, competition, bidding, blaming ...*
to: *interpretation, cohesion, analysis, planning, negotiation. ..*
This will be based on people knowing why things are happening, on access to facts and data. For example, minutes of SMT meetings are published in a weekly college bulletin for staff; SMT provides 'roadshows' at each site on important issues; the principal holds regular surgeries. We say to staff, 'This is what the facts seem to show. What do you make of it?'

The process of reviewing the operation of a procedure or role in order to analyse problems and draw up a strategy for improvement ought to work. The involvement in the review and action planning process of representatives of all the parties involved should be influential in ensuring that everyone is committed to implementing the agreed procedures, and making them work.

Points to ponder:

- **Do staff need to know each other in order to share values?**
- **Are shared values the same as shared information?**

See *Section 6 Style*

Aspects of the existing organisational structure may be affecting the implementation of objectives in the college strategic plan. The strategy may necessitate changes to the structure. Gaps may need to be filled by the creation of new roles, or by the establishment of new relationships between groups. There may be an imbalance within the existing structure, as new functions evolve. The way in which functions are delineated and allocated may cause conflicts or confusion amongst staff, and block effective implementation of the college's objectives.

The size of colleges within the FE sector varies enormously. A sixth form college may have 120 staff based at one site. A general FE college, formed out of the merger of four or five previous colleges, may have as many as ten or 12 campuses, and 1000 staff, spread over a wide geographical area. The structures that are required for effective working in these widely differing circumstances would be expected to vary in proportion to the variation in size. Certainly, large and dispersed colleges face particular challenges in communicating with staff and achieving a common culture and purpose. However, within the FEDA project sample of ten colleges, which represented the full spectrum, a striking degree of *commonality* on structural issues and their implications for implementing objectives in the colleges' strategic plans.

- What are the implications of the strategy for the college's organisational structure?
- Can the existing organisational structure deliver the strategy?
- Are there aspects of the structure which are affecting implementation of the plan?

'Growth strategies and the college structure have been reviewed in parallel, as the existing structure contains barriers to growth.'

Key issues

Strategy calls for changes to structure

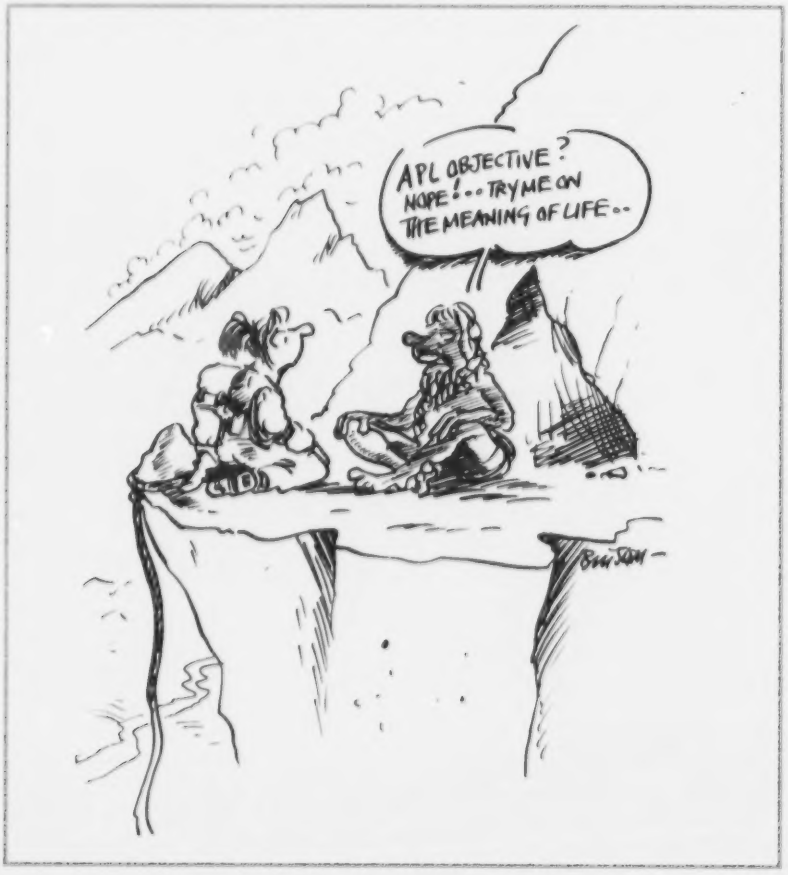
Aspects of the existing organisational structure can work against the implementation of objectives in the strategic plan. Difficulties may be caused by a lack of mechanisms enabling different groups to work together, or because of the emergence new functions have emerged which have not been allocated to a particular post.

4.1 **Are there gaps in the college organisational structure and infrastructure which are affecting implementation of the college's objectives?**

For example

- **GNVQ co-ordinator**
- **link between Marketing and Admissions Units**
- **link between the Admissions Unit and faculties regarding APL procedures**
- **responsibility for monitoring performance and delivery on a college charter undertaking**

'No one I spoke to regarding the APL objective seemed to know who is responsible for leading activity in relation to this objective, whether any plans exist, or what is planned. Perhaps I spoke to the wrong people.'



'No one seemed to know who is responsible for APL ... '

- \Difficulties in setting up the student mentor system in the college were related to communication problems:

For example,

- getting hold of a full list of course tutors and matching these up with the details of courses
- deciding which courses and tutors to target
- getting hold of those tutors on the phone

The college is in the process of restructuring, so this obviously complicates matters. However, the only formal mechanism for contacting tutors is via the programme managers, and these are too far removed, and would only add another layer of people to communicate with.

- In cases where these approaches are not working as well as they might, apparent gaps in the infrastructure were identified as the cause.

For example,

- the mechanism for careers guidance staff to work with personal tutors. (Is there a faculty campus contact for careers guidance or is the link through the faculty campus contact for the personal tutor system? The latter may be overloaded).
- infrastructure for the marketing function

- Programme area leaders said they would welcome a specialist function in the college to undertake market research, as distinct from promotional marketing activity.

4.2 **Is the existing structure working with, or against, planned college developments?**

For example

- **GNVQs call for a team approach; they cut across traditional subject boundaries and core skills should be assessed in vocational contexts. Many sixth-form colleges are organised in small subject-based departments, with little tradition of course delivery by teams.**

- Because approximately 90% of the curriculum consisted of single subject A levels and GCSEs, a team approach to delivery has not been required until now. The introduction and expansion of GNVQs has led to adjustments to the college organisational structure; for example, HoDs have been re-named 'curriculum managers', and the post of GNVQ curriculum manager has been integrated into the overall structure.

- Marketing has been better organised since a marketing manager was appointed. There is more evidence of a planning cycle, which provides a framework for activity. However, since there is now a specialist post, there is a tendency to leave it all up to him.

- The college has a fairly complex structure which allows for a number of different lines of communication. The original message communicated, is therefore more susceptible to different translation, interpretation and understanding.

- The fact that each member of staff has several roles is effective in terms of staff knowing what is going on and making links between related developments. However, the cross-college roles take up a substantial proportion of time, and this can result in a form of short termism. When many conflicting demands are made, an individual will tend to respond to the most pressing, so that issues requiring long-term planning and implementation remain at the bottom of the pile.

\Sometimes the organisational structure gets in the way, because protocol prevents direct communication. This can lead to delay or to solutions which are not ideal, and ultimately to a waste of resources.

4.3 **Are there mechanisms which enable staff on different axes of the organisational structure to work in partnership, collaborate and understand each others' points of view?**

For example

- **'live matrix' through dual roles**
- **committees, projects, task groups, support groups for staff working on similar tasks**
- **'timetabled' meetings**
- **faculty or campus liaison roles**

  i.e.. named contact in each faculty and at each campus for liaison with the cross-college co-ordinator; for example, contacts for core skills, admissions, tutoring, marketing
- **joint reviews**

For example

admissions staff and programme leaders together reviewing enrolment

Cross directorate communication channels are less well developed. The member of staff interviewed was not aware of the existence of any cross-college teams. Progress on aspects requiring cross-college co-ordination can be problematic because the mechanisms are relatively weak. There are problems for cross-college co-ordinators about where best to feed in comments.

Communication between personal tutors and cross-college services was identified as an issue.

The whole strategic planning process is supported by strong formal and informal links between the executive and programmes and across programmes. The proposed marketing group, drawing on staff from the programme areas to link with the executive director (Marketing), will create a formal liaison structure to support the marketing plan.

To respond to the shortfall in growth, the Growth Action Team was reconstituted with a modified remit. A more focused approach was taken to growth with each of three senior managers being responsible for a market segment. By slicing responsibilities vertically rather than horizontally (non-sponsored adult learners, 16-19, business), barriers caused by internal competitiveness were cut through, allowing a much more responsive approach. This college-wide initiative could not have been implemented through one of the existing divisions.

In order to implement the operating plan, a number of teams have been established within student services. A co-ordinator has been identified for each of these. The teams are in the process of developing action plans for their areas of responsibility.

At one sixth form college a 'live matrix' is formed, in part, by the fact that most members of staff wear more than one `hat'; for example, one member of staff carries the roles of curriculum director for Science and Technology, quality assurance co-ordinator, and GNVQ co-ordinator. curriculum managers are also set tutors, and carry cross-college responsibilities such as IT co-ordinator, or college timetabler. Curriculum managers are also set tutors, and carry cross-college responsibilities such as IT co-ordinator, or college timetabler. Most set tutors will also be members of at least one curriculum management team.

A college board meets regularly (at least once a fortnight, if not weekly), and this brings together the college executive, curriculum directors, senior tutors and the director of careers. Each vice principal meets weekly, with the senior staff on his or her arm of the matrix. A briefing for all staff is held every Friday morning (10-15 minutes).

At one sixth-form college, most members of staff wear several hats

Delineating and allocating functions

The way in which functions have been delineated and allocated may be causing conflicts or confusion amongst staff and can block the effective implementation of objectives.

4.4 **Have functions been analysed and understood, so that roles can be delineated and allocated appropriately?**

For example

- **APL**
- **Marketing**

The principal was minded to restructure the management team, to bring together responsibility for marketing, development and strategic planning in one post, rather than simply reappointing a marketing director. This intention carried with it an implicit recognition that the previous split structure could be improved upon.

The quality assurance co-ordinator took up his role in September. This is a new role and a new function. The job title of the new post suggests that the remit includes responsibility for all aspects of quality assurance. However, in practice the remit seems to comprise responsibility for the quality audit process only. He is not sure how far the remit extends.

4.5 **Has the implementation of some objectives been affected by factors relating to the delineation and allocation of roles within the organisational structure?**

For example

- **ambiguity about the nature of the role**
- **inappropriate location of the role within the organisational structure for example, no contact with the right people**
- **uncertainty about the boundaries of the role in relation to other roles**
- **unclear reporting lines**
- **inappropriate level; for example, lack of 'clout'**

- The Executive Director (Marketing) has overall responsibility within the college for tactical marketing (PR and advertising, enrolment and guidance, etc.) and is now drawing up a marketing plan. The Head of Corporate Planning is responsible for the college strategic plan, including needs analysis, and the development of initiatives to promote growth. Both say that they understand the boundaries between their roles, but it seems that the marketing responsibilities are split between the two in a way that could make the development of a clear strategy more difficult.
- Staff are not clear where, in the college, overall responsibility for managing quality assurance is located. Is it one of the VPs? There is a quality review committee, chaired by the VPs in rotation. Or is the principal responsible for quality assurance, and through her, the board of governors? It was the VP (Curriculum) who drew up the quality targets for the first area to be audited.
- There is an apparent lack of clarity concerning what needs to be done, how and, by whom, in relation to the Action Point; Develop the link between the Admissions Unit and Marketing.
- Does the initiative reside with the Marketing Manager or the Academic Registrar? How does the Marketing Manager work with other services and groups in the college?
- The location of related functions in different segments of the organisational structure may make it difficult to develop coherent systems and lead to some initiatives `falling between two stools'. For example the marketing manager is located with facilities and marketing whereas the academic registrar and dean of student services report to the AP (Curriculum). Innovation and Enterprise are located with the VP(Resources). Common membership of the curriculum committee may mitigate this.
- In some cases there was a lack of clarity about where responsibility is located and the boundaries of staff roles. This can of course tend to lead to objectives `falling between two stools' when it comes to initiating action.

Imbalance

An imbalance in the structure can be caused as new functions evolve

For example

- between strong traditional delivery structures (for example, faculties, departments, divisions) and growing cross-college services (for example, admissions, guidance)
- between teachers and new support roles (for example, learning resources adviser, instructor)
- between traditional support roles (for example, administration, technician, counsellor)

and new support roles (for example, MIS officer, learning centre manager).

The implementation of objectives can be blocked by counter productive relationships between groups of staff. The contributions of staff in new roles may be lost because they do not have sufficient access to decision making and consultative processes, or effective mechanisms for working with other groups of staff.

4.6 Is there an appropriate balance between 'providers' and 'services'?

- Traditionally deans of faculty have had a high degree of autonomy, but the balance is shifting with the growth of cross-college services; for example, central admissions. Tension between the two groups is growing, centring on the distribution of resources and a general unease about who now calls the tune.

4.7 In order to play their part in implementing objectives effectively, do 'cross-college' and service staff have:

- **sufficient power?**

For example

- **level of seniority of co-ordinators and managers**
- **effective communication channels, and mechanisms for working with teaching staff in departments?**
- **membership of decision making groups?**

For example

SMT, academic board

4.8 **Are mechanisms in place for cross-college staff to contribute to the formulation and review of the strategic plan?**

- The college structure for delivery of the curriculum through faculties, with student support organised on a cross-college basis, seemed to offer both advantages and disadvantages for implementation of the retention report. A number of the cross-college managers said that they had little power to implement the recommendations without the co-operation of faculties.

Effective structures for large colleges

Large colleges, with several campuses spread over a wide area, faced particular problems in implementing objectives which called for common systems and approaches across the college.

4.9 **In large, multi-sited colleges, have structures been established which assist the effective implementation of objectives?**

- At this large, merged and geographically spread college, faculties tend to operate on more than one campus, so that at each campus, several faculties will be operating. Consequently, 'faculty campus contacts' have been appointed for some college systems; for example, the Personal Tutor System; Admissions. The faculty campus contacts meet regularly with the managers responsible for these systems and with the other faculty campus contacts, in order to review and plan operations. They act as a two way communication channel between colleagues in their faculty at their campus, and the cross-college service managers, while at the same time working with other 'faculty campus contacts' to establish a college approach.
- The multi-site and merged nature of the college makes implementation of a consistent approach difficult. Communication is a big challenge, at both strategic and operational levels (for example, the need for separate briefing meetings on the retention project at each site, difficulties in establishing liaison between cross-college managers and faculties split between different sites).
- The college is in the process of re-structuring. The problem is that faculties can be spread over two or three centres. We tried centre contacts for cross-college services, but they didn't work because more than one faculty operates at each centre. The new structure consists of a number of schools (previously programme areas), with a director based at each centre where the school operates. Schools may be duplicated at different centres so each will relate to a different centre-based director. This may result in accentuating the fact that the college originated in a merger of three separate institutions. This effect is likely to be reinforced by the fact that the college is, at the same time, taking steps to minimise staff travel between sites.
- A liaison scheme has been requested, with a member of staff from each faculty getting two hours remission per week for the purpose. But the multi-sited nature of the college will cause problems, since one faculty representative cannot easily pass on information to faculty colleagues based at different sites.

Several factors are currently exerting pressure on colleges to establish and operate effective systems across the organisation as a whole. These factors include:

- pressure to expand and make efficiency gains
- operational requirements of the FEFC funding methodology
- GNVQs
- modularisation/unit-based qualifications
- full implementation of Youth Credits

In response, colleges are developing and introducing common systems such as:

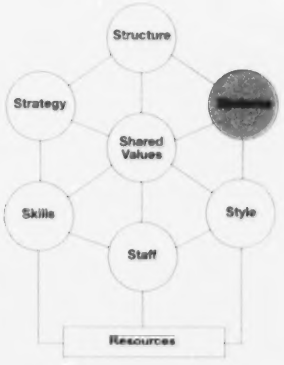
- 'central' admissions
- student tracking
- student support
- learning resources centres

This represents a particular challenge for larger colleges, perhaps made up of a number of previously independent institutions, spread over several sites. Smaller colleges, with a tradition of strong, semi-autonomous departments, are also finding that the introduction of common cross-college systems represents a considerable change, not least in terms of `culture shift'.

The extent to which a college is able to establish and operate effective systems is therefore likely to affect the success of the college in implementing development and in achieving its stated targets.

A strong culture of resistance

In some colleges there is a strong culture of resistance to the establishment of 'central' or common systems, and a tradition of allegiance to the idiosyncratic systems which have evolved within departments, divisions or campuses.



Key issues

Establishing systems

Achievement of strategic objectives is likely to be affected by the extent to which the college has succeeded in establishing effective systems across the college as a whole.

5.1 **How successful is the college in establishing and operating effective systems?**

When particular systems were introduced (for example, recording student progress and achievement, central admissions) did the college ensure:

- **involvement of the staff who will operate the system in the design of the system?**
- **a clear understanding, amongst staff, of why the system was needed?**
- **opportunities for staff to explore the use of the system before it was introduced?**

For example

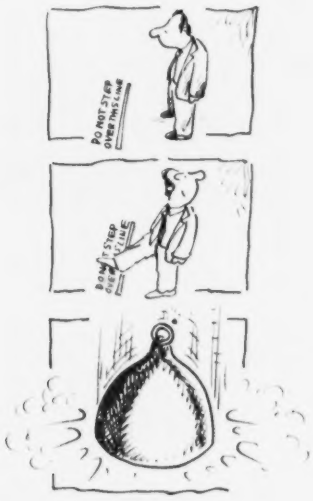
staff development to practise necessary skills

opportunities for all users to comment on the system, review its operation and suggest modifications? (Were these opportunities planned, or a reaction to problems when they arose?)

ongoing monitoring of the operation of the system?

ongoing support for the staff responsible?

People will always circumvent systems, sooner or later. They need to be able to work within a clear framework, while retaining some of the aspects they value. For example, when the central admissions service was introduced, it was important for tutors to retain a degree of personal contact with prospective students.



people will always circumvent systems, sooner or later

- Getting people to be happy with a common system is difficult because they tend only to be interested in the requirements of their part of the college. They will tend to look for ways in which the system doesn't work, so they need to get a response to any suggestions or criticisms. There is a dialogue, and people can feed in their suggestions. Once people see the benefits, that's half the battle won!
- Providing a common framework for the college through packs of materials, standard procedures and the faculty campus contact system seems to be working but perhaps needs time to 'bed down'. However, faculty campus contacts need to be confident in the systems themselves to be able to implement the system effectively in their own faculty.
- To support the restructuring, two hours each week for a term have been set aside to provide staff development for the new heads of schools. Cross-college managers have been able to work with them on systems, and it has been possible to introduce a standard common approach in place of the historical approaches adopted by different faculties.
- Faculty Campus Contacts for Admissions evidently feel a sense of ownership of the system, in partnership with Admissions Unit staff. There was an appreciation on all `sides', of the problems facing the various parties involved, and the complexity of the task. There was no 'blaming'. There was a sense of confidence and trust that the group would be able to address issues and achieve solutions by means of the faculty campus contacts' schedule of meetings and reviews.
- A personal tutor programme has been established. All staff were sent a copy of the programme and were invited to attend a half-day staff development session to introduce it. There is no monitoring procedure in place yet.
- Establishing cross-college systems for managing student learning was identified by a number of those interviewed as critical to the improvement of retention rates. However, the introduction of consistent college-wide systems had been found difficult. This was partly attributed to the style of the college, which sought to use consensus rather than imposition, and party to the fact that the college was large and formed out of the merger of several separate colleges.

5.2 **Did the college invest sufficient resources in the introduction/management and operation of the system?**

For example

- **calibre, level of seniority of staff**
- **staff time**
- **hardware/software**

- The managers for Admissions, Learning Resources and MIS have been working together to design new enrolment procedures.
- Support from 'central' college services is perceived as spread too thinly over six campuses.
- There has been no formal preliminary consultation before introducing the Course Procedures File, but it addresses difficulties that were identified previously, so people ought to be pleased with it! Good practice has been built into it, and it draws on the lessons learned from the annual review process. Each section of the file will probably be reviewed after it has been used; for example, on completion of the induction process.

5.3 **In order to make full use of the energy expended in establishing and operating systems, has the college succeeded in ensuring that related systems mesh together efficiently?**

For example

- **coordinating quality review and planning processes**
- **setting the parameters for bids for curriculum development project resources, at the same time as setting college objectives**

Are review systems used for:

- **analysing problems?**
- **drawing up strategies?**
- **monitoring implementation of objectives?**

Several references were made to the review process contributing to the strategic planning process. It appears that although no calendar of review points has so far been drawn up, the review process is being formalised and standardised. This would enable the review and planning systems to mesh; for example, by synchronising timing by enabling requests for data to be anticipated and mechanisms to be put in place to capture and process the information that is needed.

In areas of the college where planning and quality review are linked, and seen as on-going processes, strategic planning is experienced as meaningful and relatively straightforward.

The co-ordination of staff development planning and resource allocation with strategic planning and the preparation of operating statements is likely to encourage the setting of more ambitious objectives, and to assist implementation.

There is a danger that improving the MIS will lead to a drop in recorded retention since it will be then measured more accurately. This could be difficult for staff morale.

5.4 **Are there examples of systems that have been introduced successfully at the college?**

What were the factors which assisted this process?

For example

- **creation of task groups comprising representatives of all users, to design and steer the introduction of new systems**

The use of faculty campus contacts as a means of operating a dispersed central system seems to be working well, where regular meetings between the central service staff and faculty campus contacts are held. This has enabled a sense of mutual understanding, trust and shared ownership of both problems and strategies to be established.

The development and refinement of common frameworks for activity (for example, admissions procedures, personal tutor programme) for the college, communicated by means of guidelines, booklets, and assignments, developed by central college service staff working with Faculty Campus Contacts, seems to be providing an effective unifying force for the work of the college.They are also likely to have a beneficial effect on the quality of the service provided for students and other clients of the college by enhancing consistency.

- **creation of common frameworks, with some flexibility for adaptation, for use by staff in different parts of the college**

For example

different kinds of students
different kinds of 'subject'
different locations
the culture of different sites

- The strategy for implementing a tutorial curriculum at this large multi-site college involves the production of a common bank of materials, using TVEI money. A representative from each faculty has been working under the guidance of the student services manager to develop a different section of materials. Each tutor will receive a ring binder containing samples of the materials, together with a list of all the materials available at each site. The aim is to have a bank of tutorial materials in libraries and study centres at each site.

- **adoption of meetings calendars to ensure that groups of staff are able to meet regularly**

- There is a college meeting slot from 3.00-5.00p.m. every Friday afternoon. The problem is that people have to choose between competing meetings.

- The introduction of new staff contracts has enabled the college to set aside four or five days per year, as development (or 'D') days for staff to get together to undertake college-wide curriculum and staff development activity

- **clear communication and reporting systems**

  For example

  minutes of meetings going to a named senior manager who can respond, quickly, if necessary

- Staff interviewed felt that communication channels in the college are effective; there are regular meetings; minutes of meetings go on to the principal, who responds quickly. Staff are asked to contribute agenda items for meetings they attend.

- Communication at the college seems to be very effective. This is achieved, in part, by the fact that a system of regular meetings 'oils the wheels' of the college's organisational structure and systems.

- **piloting new systems with pre-set dates for evaluation and review**

- The process of reviewing the operation of a procedure or role, in order to analyse problems and draw up a strategy for improvement, appears to be working. Involvement in the review and action planning process of representatives of all the parties involved, seems to be influential in ensuring that everyone is committed to implementing the agreed procedures, and making them work.

Systems blockages

The implementation of objectives is often blocked by problems relating to college systems

5.5 **Have problems related to systems resulted in blockages to the effective implementation of the strategic plan?**

For example

- **inefficient or inadequate systems**

  For example

  unsatisfactory MIS

- **a lack of ownership in and commitment to the system by staff and other users**

  For example

  lack of staff development

  insufficient involvement of staff in designing and reviewing the system

  poor communicators in key positions

- If the faculty campus contact doesn't pass on information, monitor what is going on, and play an effective co-ordinating role, the others in the faculty are cut off and cut out, so that the system doesn't work. The faculties nominate their contact people, so the co-ordinator at the centre of the cross-college service has no say in getting people who share a common vision.

- **gaps in systems**

- The directorate review of the current operating statement was able to address concrete issues. It is more difficult to deal with aspects that relate to college systems and processes, since there are no obvious channels for this.

- There does not appear to be any mechanism for the two careers advisers to work with Personal Tutors at the six campuses.

- **the fact that the purpose and operation of the system have not been fully thought through**

- **the fact that a single system will not suit all parts of the college**

For example

- **different departments**
- **different sites**

- Where the implementation of objectives in the strategic plan is proceeding less smoothly, the following factors seemed to be relevant.

- the system that has been developed does not suit the circumstances of all six campuses equally well.
  For example, the personal tutor system may suit a tertiary centre (mainly full-time 16-19 students) better than a campus that has evolved out of a GFE college (part-time employed students, vocational qualifications). This may be due to the perceptions and traditions of staff and amenable to change. Or it may indicate that a common system for the whole college will not work effectively.

- The system which has been devised for the implementation of our tutorial policy relies on a particular model of delivery; for example, a timetabled hour for tutorials. This is appropriate in some faculties, but in others, especially where the curriculum mainly consists of NVQs, this is just not suitable. There is a dilemma. Should we try to encourage all faculties to use the same approach, or allow different approaches to continue?

- **lack of contact between people with similar or interlocking roles**

- Some problems seemed to stem from a lack of contact between people with similar roles, based in different faculties and on different campuses. There was no opportunity for them to compare how the common approach was evolving, to share problems or to refine the system. Hence the system was diversifying in the way it was operating in different parts of the college.

Factors relating to style can affect the successful implementation of college strategic plans and operating statements.

For example

- The management style(s) of the principal, senior managers, and middle managers will affect the way in which changes and developments are approached, and the likely responses of staff.
- The way in which staff tend to respond to new initiatives and changes may allow progress to be achieved in the face of difficult circumstances or prevent successful implementation even when other factors are favourable.
- The approach the college is predisposed to adopt will shape its likely response, whatever the opportunities or circumstances.
  For example
  - whether to collaborate or to compete
  - 'open' or 'closed' response to approaches from outside bodies.

The interplay between the style(s) of managers and the attitudes of staff is obviously complex, and these in turn are influenced by the other Ss; for example, systems, structures, shared values. However, whatever the cause-and-effect relationship between these factors, the predominant style(s) operating within the college may be counter-productive to the achievement of objectives, and therefore need to be considered.

Key issues

Kinds of Style

Since style can affect the implementation of objectives, it is helpful to be aware of the characteristic style(s) operating at the college. To seek to change an unhelpful style, or to investigate its adverse effects, it will be necessary to identify its origins.

6.1 **What kinds of style are operating at the college?**

What characterises the approaches of:

- **the senior management team to the introduction of changes?**

  For example

  belief that sharing information is dangerous or empowering
  cautious or adventurous
  paternalistic, maternalistic .
  dictatorial or consultative

- **the principal, to suggestions or requests from staff?**
- **staff, to requests for information, or the introduction of new systems?**

Indicators of styles found operating in the sample of colleges involved in the FEDA project, included:

- Management style

  beliefs about what motivates staff:

  For example

  money, in the form of personal bonuses
  acknowledgement, recognition, new responsibilities
  benefits for students
  involvement in decision making
  'it can't be too much to ask of you, if you're still surviving'
  college principals who habitually speak in the first person singular, when referring to the management and achievements of the college
  'get them by the balls, and the hearts and minds will soon follow'

'It can't be too much to ask of you if you are still surviving ...'

- Staff style

  'just tell us what to do - it's not our job to plan, take the initiative, etc'
  'my job is just to teach - exceptionally well'
  'don't stick your neck out, and nothing can be held against you'

'we can sort it out between us'
- Shared style
'we're all in the same boat, we sink or swim together'
review, plan, act, improve, review

See Section 3 Shared values

Indicators of style found at one college:
- high reliance on cross-college co-operation
- reluctance to impose change on staff by management dictate
- voluntary not compulsory training
- cross-college managers with no direct power over faculties, but need to persuade
- words like 'networking', 'negotiation' and 'motivation' are used to describe senior management roles, rather than `directing' or 'deciding'.

The college commitment to 'opportunity for all' and client-centredness is strongly shared amongst managers and support staff, but there are still some areas of the college which it has not reached. The budget strategy will force them to conform in the end.

Individual targets based on the operational plan have been agreed as part of the Performance Managed Pay process, which is working its way down the organisation during the autumn, following the governors setting targets for the Chief Executive in July.

The college is responsive to new ideas and encourages staff to 'have a go', rather than squashing them.

6.2 **What are the origins of the dominating style(s) operating at the college?**

For example
- **personal style of the principal?**
- **history, tradition, culture, shared values?**
(the way we've always done things around here)
- **structures, systems?**
- **some influential individuals?**
- **conscious efforts to establish a particular approach**

For example
- **time spent on formulation and reinforcement of college values**
- **Investors in People (IIP)**
- **Process re-engineering**

See Section 3 Shared values

Productive or counter-productive styles

A positive attitude by staff or managers can bring about a positive result even when other circumstances are unfavourable. The opposite is also true. A productive style can be undermined by other factors, so it is important to identify what these are.

6.3 **Is the current style productive, or counter productive?**

For example
- **characteristic approaches of senior managers**
- **characteristic approaches of middle managers**
- **characteristic attitudes of staff or groups**

Does the current style need to be changed or strengthened?

6.4 **What factors are undermining the beneficial effects of the desired style?**

For example

lack of time to consult

style can be stymied by circumstances and especially by time factors!

'there was a shared consultative style but short time scales did not permit consultation'

'our style is consensus, not imposition, but consensus can take a very long time'

Consistency

Conflicting styles can prevent the development and implementation of a coherent strategy. On the other hand, amongst team members complementary styles can strengthen the operation of the team as a whole. A consistent style may be a strength because people know what to expect.

6.5 **Is the style consistent?**

- **Are there conflicting styles in operation?**

  For example

  dislocation of styles amongst members of SMT, and between SMT and middle managers

  conflicting expectations of behaviour and interpretations of events by managers and staff
- **Is it necessary to maintain a consistent style amongst SMT members?**
- **Is there room for flexibility? Are styles complementary?**
- **Is it possible to maintain a consistent style in the face of challenging circumstances?**

  For example

  budget short falls

  staff redundancies
- **Can *any* style be effective, provided it is consistent?**
- **Is consistency undermined, as strategies are filtered through different layers of staff, and the varying styles of individuals?**
- **Is the dominant style in steady state, developing, or undergoing change? *For example* in transition from x to y**

In the course of interviews, various different styles in the approach of the college to strategic planning and to marketing emerged:

- strategic planning has been carried out in a highly participative way, involving many staff from programme areas and across the college in developing ideas and proposing targets. The needs analysis trawled for as wide as possible a range of needs and opportunities, and an entrepreneurial approach was then taken to developing these opportunities

- the newly developing marketing plan is taking a more analytical approach, identifying a need for research information to support targeting decisions about college developments. There is an intention to build a culture of 'marketing is everyone's responsibility', which is in line with the college's approach to other developments. The requirement to develop a written marketing plan separately from the college strategic plan has led to concern that this will be a 'bureaucratic exercise, carried out at the expense of actually getting anything done'.
  Members of staff at the college did not seem to have reconciled these two styles (either by moving towards one of them or by accepting that both were needed). For example, although one member of staff said that 'Extending the college's work in the adult market is a development priority; the college needs much better information in this area before it will be able to develop a well-supported plan', others did not agree that more research was needed.
- Staff were informed at the end of the summer term that they would be teaching on a new course. Some did not learn of their involvement until September, without any prior discussion. The lack of consultation did not appear to be resented by staff. The timetabling for new courses, without prior discussion with staff, was accepted practice in the college.

Strategy (It won't just happen!)

Failure to progress towards the achievement of strategic objectives can be due to the fact that the strategies for implementation have not been thought through.

Looking for the strategy

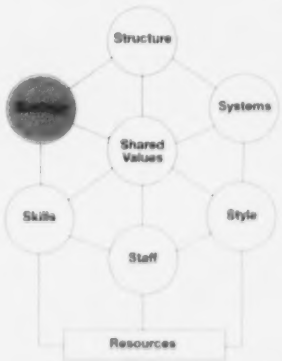
Some college strategic plans lack strategy!

For example

- objectives describe current practice rather than new or specific developments
- faculty operating statements don't relate to college strategic objectives
- there is a lack of clarity about what needs to be done, how, when and by whom

Effective strategies require:

- detailed analysis of the action required
- analysis of the underlying 'problem' and agreement about the causes; for example, of high drop-out rates
- establishment of a base-line or starting point; for example, through an audit
- recognition and co-ordination of existing pockets of relevant developments
- imagination to identify workable 'solutions', using the tools to hand
- sequencing and co-ordination of action points
- prioritisation



The achievement of objectives may require:

- a change of organisational culture before strategies can be implemented

For example

- from: *students drop out because of financial and social problems so there is little that we, as teachers, can do*
- to: *there* ***are*** *things that we can do*

a more radical strategy, or a number of different strategies, for different parts of the college

- There is an assumption that if you can get it right in parts of the college which are receptive, the rest will follow. This assumption may be false.
- Some of the objectives are very general, and describe present practice rather than new or specific developments. Consequently, there is nothing much to say or do about them.
- The kneejerk reaction to freeze the post is symptomatic of a lack of confidence by the SMT in its ability to make strategic decisions. This lack of confidence has manifested itself on a number of occasions. It is not clear whether it is due to a lack of information or a lack of decision-making skills.

See *Section I The production of the plan*

Key issues

Detailed analysis of necessary action

Some objectives prove difficult to implement because they have not been analysed and broken down into their component activities. Only when this has been done will it be possible to sequence and co-ordinate those, and monitor the progress of implementation.

7.1 **In order to achieve a particular objective, has there been a detailed analysis of the necessary action?**

The objective of improving retention rates comprises a significant number of sub-objectives. These have been identified following a detailed analysis of the factors which affect student drop-out. The sub objectives have been grouped under six headings:

- improving information
- recruitment/enrolment
- changes in course administration
- improved student welfare and guidance
- teaching, learning support and standards
- support and guidance in progressing beyond the college

Inside every strategy are several more ...

The project on implementing the student charter is being managed by the quality manager. It involves holding three 'charter weeks', one each term, highlighting different aspects of the charter. Planning is at an advanced stage. The first term will cover issues of recruitment and enrolment, the second term will address issues concerning the quality of the programme and the third, progression. The programme will involve the following:

1 Learning support tutors working with their students to produce a user-friendly version of the charter. The work will highlight the rights of the student and the use of advocacy.

2 Volunteer tutors of GNVQ students working with their groups to encourage the use of the charter and to devise ways of disseminating it effectively.

3 Special events, with speakers, open to both staff and students. These will include sessions on the 16 hour rule, recreational demonstrations in the gym and library use. The emphasis will be on enjoyment and making the most of time at college.

4 Staff development sessions to help tutors make use of the charter with students. These will be planned by the quality manager and staff development officer and will comprise one-hour sessions, with lunch, to be held on the three main sites.

- Systems and structures to improve retention are in place, but there are some outstanding problems which need to be addressed:
  - resourcing staff time, to accelerate developments and achieve something tangible quickly
  - interface between cross-college managers and tutors
  - previously inefficient MIS - there is a danger that improvements in this area could lead to a drop in recorded retention because of more accurate measurement. This would be very bad for morale
- The objective was to seek to obtain the highest possible grades from FEFC inspectors.
  A complete action plan had been drawn up. An objective had been to involve as many staff as possible, including support staff. A conscious decision had been made to take a bottom-up approach. Action started at programme level. An introductory session was held in each faculty involving both teaching and support staff. Staff were asked to consider the inspection indicators that were relevant at programme level. They then had to identify evidence relating to the indicators, grade themselves and identify areas for further action. The process was repeated as a whole faculty and all the indicators were considered. SMT then looked at all the criteria across the college. The document was then analysed, by an analysis group that was set up for the purpose, and the results used to plan the next steps.
  A member of the SMT will be responsible for monitoring actions between now and a second audit to be undertaken in March. This audit will be carried out by a cross-college audit team. Applications to be part of this team have been invited through the staff newsletter. Training for the team in carrying out the audit will take place in February.
- Successful implementation of the retention objective will depend on:
  - changing staff attitudes
  - establishing cross-college systems and procedures for managing the student learning process from admission to exit
  - improving the induction process to focus more on the curriculum
  - putting resources into the physical support infrastructure (e.g.childcare, open learning)
- A strategy for implementation has not been thought through or made explicit. As a result, there has been little purposeful action, and it has been impossible to co-ordinate and monitor progress.

7.2 **In working towards the achievement of a particular objective, were the various component sub-objectives sequenced and co-ordinated effectively?**

- The objective is to incorporate new technologies into teaching and learning and develop initiatives to extend their use in resource-based learning and open learning as well as mainstream provision. With such a broad objective, one problem is co-ordinating the various developments within a systematic plan.
- A learner-centred curriculum model for tutoring requires development in related areas; for example, the establishment of learning resources centres. Consequently, before the Dean of Student Services can attempt to implement a learner-centred tutorial model at the college, it has been necessary to first address some major changes in the ways in which the curriculum is delivered.

7.3 **Were action points prioritised, so that visible progress could be made?**

- Faced with 40 recommendations a kind of paralysis set in.

Faced with 40 recommendations a kind of paralysis set in

Workable and effective strategies

Effective strategies require analysis of the underlying 'problem' so that an appropriate means of tackling it can be agreed. Workable strategies will take account of the 6S and 1R framework, making imaginative use of the tools that are to hand. Effective implementation of a particular objective may require a change in college culture, and this will need to be addressed by the strategy.

7.4 **Was there general agreement about the underlying causes of a problem and about the action that would therefore be required?**

For example

- **consensus amongst members of SMT**
- **agreement between SMT and staff**
- **consensus amongst different groups of staff**

- No clear view emerged about how the college should achieve future growth. One strand of thought was that proper market research was needed before marketing targets could be set. But others felt that adequate research information was already available from outside organisations such as the TEC. Another separate strand was that the role of the college was to respond to whatever needs arose from the local community, and that this therefore militated against the college targeting its offer on particular groups. This thinking has not yet been drawn together into a coherent strategic position.

- Progress on implementing the objective: *To embed an understanding of and commitment to marketing across the college, through a programme of professional development* seemed to be blocked. Although all the team share the general goal of improving the marketing of the college, there is no explicit agreement as to specific goals and the methods of achieving them. It is not clear that all the members of the team share a common understanding of what is involved in marketing the college and which skills members of staff will need to develop. Each member of the team has identified slightly different problems which they hope the programme will address.

See *Section 3 Shared Values*

7.5 **Were workable and imaginative strategies formulated, which made use of the tools to hand, and which took account of the 6S and 1 R framework?**

- In order to reduce its average level of funding (ALF) from £26.74 to around £18, the college is devolving FEFC units to programme areas at a rate of £12.00 per unit, retaining £6.00 per unit for central overheads. Each programme area has been given information about its actual costs, including staffing , and asked to come up with a business plan to deliver an agreed target number of units at £12.00 per unit. The intention is to develop a caseloading philosophy that gives teaching teams the responsibility for delivery and quality within a specific resource envelope. As a result, all programme areas are working urgently to develop more flexible and economical modes of delivery. Staff in programme areas where staffing levels are high are particularly highly motivated. They are saying to managers, 'What are you going to do to help us?'

  The college strategic plan 1994/7 emphasises increased retention as an important strategic objective. A TEC-sponsored retention report was completed early in 1994 and this report concluded that:

  'While financial hardship may be an important factor, it is by no means the sole or main determinant of drop-out, and, in the light of the survey data, is unlikely to cause substantial non-completion except in conjunction with other factors . Those who withdraw are not those beset by unusual financial difficulties, but those for whom their financial problems are compounded by dissatisfaction with aspects of the College.'

  The college decided to follow-up the Retention project through 'a high-profile in-house project headed up by the Deputy Principal' (*Strategic Plan 1994/7*). This in-house project would begin with dissemination of the Retention project findings and development of an action plan, which would address factors highlighted by the report:

- improved information on retention
- action at the stage of recruitment/enrolment
- changes in course administration
- improved student welfare and guidance
- teaching/learning support and standards
- support and guidance in progressing beyond the college

The college drew these measures, and some additional ones, into a coherent project. The intention was to give the project a title and a logo, and to appoint a project leader responsible to the deputy principal. Their role was to promote and provide a focus for the work on retention and to monitor the effectiveness of strategy and systems implemented 'on the ground'.

7.6 **Were strategies legitimised and reinforced by linking them with other developments in the college? for example, the College Charter, FEFC inspection**

- The emphasis on sharing best practice within the college has made the developments less threatening than they might otherwise have seemed.
- In order to achieve significant progress towards the use of learning resources centres, the following strategy was adopted. Course hours were top-sliced. Programme area teams were able to regain these resources by making bids to set up learning bases in their curriculum areas. Sections which had been most resistant to the use of flexible learning quickly became the strongest advocates.

7.7 **Did the strategy address the need for culture change, where this was a factor?**

- The strategy for improving retention has been strongly shaped by the recommendations of the external consultants' report, which gathered large quantities of evidence to support an analysis of the reasons for poor retention. Before the project, poor retention was widely perceived by staff as a fact of life because of the student profile of the college, with little or nothing they could do about it. This was refuted by the research which indicated that there were factors within the college's control which could influence retention. The recommendations of the report formed a starting point for the college strategy. However, progress on implementation was slow because staff questioned the consultants' findings. Since they had not been involved in the process of analysing the problems they tended to reject the solutions. The aim had been to achieve a shift in culture from 'poor retention is due to factors beyond our control' (for example, student poverty) to 'how can we support our students better'?
- The project will only go so far unless we can change staff attitudes.

See *Section 3 Shared values*

Establishing baselines

Energy can be wasted and staff can be alienated if existing pockets of developments, relevant to the current objectives, are not recognised and built on.

7.8 **Were baselines established before strategies for action were planned?**

For example

- **by means of an audit of current practice in different parts of the college to identify gaps where further development was needed**

7.9 **Were existing pockets of developments, relevant to the objective, identified, recognised, brought together and built on? for example, use of CAL flexible learning, progress on modularisation?**

- Often there are relevant pockets of developments in the college that have passed unnoticed. An audit was undertaken, which revealed exactly that. There was a lot of goodwill and a range of developments already under way, but a lack of systematic planning and co-ordination.
- Existing developments were therefore pulled together and recognised as the foundation for further work.
- In relation to both objectives, a baseline was established by some sort of audit process. This allowed gaps to be identified, indicating where action was needed, good practice to be recognised and built on, and avoided reinventing the wheel.
- Each school was supplied with relevant MIS data and asked to identify the ten per cent of their courses with the poorest retention rates. Heads of School were asked to produce action plans to improve these. The Director of Curriculum collated these action plans and provided an overview, together with a report on the implications for college systems.
  An alternative approach might have been to focus on successful strategies, to recognise and celebrate these, and to use consideration of successful strategies to inform the preparation of action plans for courses with the lowest retention rates.

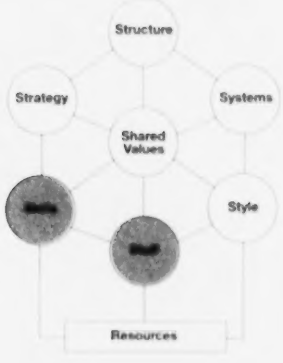
Staffing factors influence the implementation of objectives in a variety of ways.

These include:

- the extent to which the practical implications of an objective have been thought through, so that staff with the right skills and appropriately located within the organisational structure can be involved in implementation
- the availability of staff with the relevant skills
- staff attitudes towards the objective, towards the organisation, and towards their own role within it
- strategies for human resources management;for example, caseloading, workloading, performance-managed pay
- attitude of the organisation towards staff development and the investment of resources for this purpose
- the resourcing context of the college and the climate this creates for implementing change; for example, fear of redundancy

A particularly difficult background for implementing developments has been created by the introduction of new contracts for teaching staff, and the associated industrial dispute. Staff have been accustomed to expect 'remission from class contact' in order to undertake work perceived as additional to their duties (for example, curriculum development, employer liaison), and a change to this perception represents a significant shift in culture.

> At this college, performance-managed pay was introduced in 1993 primarily for staff who were 'spot-pointed' (i.e. not appointed to an incremental scale). Each individual has their own action plan and targets, and together these plans will add up to the strategic plan for the college. Currently about 200 people are involved.



Staffing implications of objectives

Lack of progress in implementing objectives can be due to a failure to think through the staffing implications. For example, it is important to involve staff with the right skills, and to allocate responsibility for implementation to an appropriately placed member of staff. Failure to involve part-time and support staff in such activities as planning meetings, staff development sessions and quality reviews, can seriously undermine progress towards the achievement of objectives.

8.1 **Were the staffing implications of each objective thought through?**

Were problems created by reliance on:

For example

- **staff with insufficient authority to lead on implementation?**
- **co-ordinators with limited access to consultative and decision making structures?**
- **staff without the necessary qualities?**

For example

poor communicators who don't see the necessity of passing on information

lack of personal credibility

lack of experience

appointment of `external' specialists (for example, marketing, personnel, accountancy) without providing them with a planned induction to the FE sector?

- The high level of interpersonal skills of the co-ordinator, and her respected status as a long established member of staff, were fundamental to the success of the project
- Staff were selected to work on the new modular programme on the basis of their availability rather than what they could offer to the programme and the profile of staff required. As a result, the modules on offer were determined by the availability of staff rather than the interests and needs of the students.
- The admissions team has recently been restructured. Previously the team included two people on the management spine and a senior lecturer, as admissions co-ordinators. This caused problems since it was expensive in salaries but they needed time off during term, to compensate for being available during the summer. This resulted in disruption of their students' programmes, and led to class-cover costs. Two of these posts have now been internally redeployed, and replaced by admissions officers on APT&C grades.
- Faculties used to handle their own admissions. Now that a central admissions service has been introduced there is a tendency for faculty staff to be hypercritical of 'central admissions', and sometimes to be unco-operative. To alleviate this, an admissions unit has been located at each site, so that admissions and faculty staff can maintain day-to-day and face-to-face contact, instead of relying on the medium of forms and notes. Pressures from the principal to streamline the service by centralising it at one site, have been resisted for this reason.
- Responsibility for co-ordinating APL in the college appears in the job description of the Guidance Co-ordinator. She has had no direct experience of APL, herself, and has only had 1.5 days training so far to prepare her for this role.

She has tried to find out whether there is a structure for APL at the college. Apparently there are APL advisers in each faculty but it is not clear who they are. The staff development officer decided to call a meeting of all members of staff with TDLB unit, D36, in order to identify who they are and what they are doing. Only one person replied. The director of curriculum is the most senior person with some responsibility for APL. The staff development officer spoke to the Director of Curriculum but the APL co-ordinator has not yet heard what the outcome was.

See *Section 4 Structure*

8.2 **Has implementation of objectives been affected by a failure to involve *part-time* staff in:**

For example

- **planning**
- **staff development**
- **meetings**
- **quality assurance processes?**

- All HoDs reported that it had proved very difficult to involve part-time staff in the process of review, owing to logistics. Team meetings are located in the full-time duty hours when many part-timers cannot get in. Nor can they be paid for attendance. It was noted that in some divisions, the numbers of part-time staff far out weighed full-timers, so their participation is crucial to the implementation of objectives
- The lack of staff development for part-timers on GNVQ requirements has led to an additional burden on GNVQ programme co-ordinators and has in some cases compromised quality.

8.3 **Has implementation of objectives been affected by a failure to involve *support staff* in:**

For example

- **planning**
- **staff development**
- **meetings**
- **quality assurance processes?**

- Factors which contributed to successful implementation included:

1 combining 'academic' and support staff
2 humanising the processes described in FEFC circulars: a non-threatening approach
3 well structured process, dissemination of information, training

Resource constraints and staff morale

The effects of resource constraints on staffing decisions and on staff morale need to be considered. Alternative strategies may be possible.

8.4 **Are resource constraints leading to a loss of motivation by staff?**

- There is little to motivate staff to take on the role of programme co-ordinator unless they are able to use it as experience in order to obtain promotion at another college
- There was a tendency to be cautious when setting objectives due to a lack of confidence regarding the availability of the necessary time and resource. The situation has improved now with a budget for staff development and an element devolved to each HoD.

8.5 **Were limitations placed on what could be achieved, by responding to resource constraints with economies which turned out to be false?**

For example

- **making internal appointments, to avoid adding to the payroll, instead of advertising externally for people with the right skills bringing experience from elsewhere**
- **appointing staff too junior and inexperienced to be effective**
- **creating a 0.5 post when there is a whole job to be done**
- **insufficient posts**

- The post of GNVQ Co-ordinator was advertised internally, and a main grade lecturer was appointed. He had no previous experience of working in a cross-college role and was now responsible for working with nine strong departments to establish consistent systems. He said he would need to spend the first term getting up to speed on all aspects of GNVQs
- The core skills co-ordinator role is a 0.5post. The post holder combines this role with eleven hours teaching. She has been unable to make much impact on this large college, especially since it is spread out over five campuses.
- There are insufficient central service staff to cover six campuses. For example, there are only two careers advisers.

Insufficient central service staff to cover six campuses

See *Section 9 Resources*

8.6 **Are pressures on staff time affecting the implementation of objectives?**

Are some members of staff so overloaded that they cannot fulfil all aspects of their role adequately, and have little or no time left to implement new initiatives?

- The main blocks to progress at the college are pressures of work and the fact that people are very conscientious about the essentials. Student requirements come first and everything else comes second.
- The perception of staff is that the allocation of co-ordinator roles, without remission, affects the quality of teaching, preparation and assessment of students' work. Staff feel that they are 'worked till they drop', and that they cannot ask for support from co-ordinators because the co-ordinators are also overstretched.

- Pressure on staff time was raised as an implementation problem:
  - by staff who perceived that they were being asked to work harder (and longer) as part of the Retention project
  - by staff who perceived that improving the admin. system would lead to more demands for bureaucracy and therefore less time to spend on students (although this was not the perception of senior managers, who took the view that improved systems would save time)
  - by cross-college managers, as a barrier to gaining co-operation for initiatives from faculties
  - by cross-college managers, who need to prioritise the recommendations of the Retention project because they cannot develop them all at once

8.7 **How can conflicting perceptions about reasonable workloads be reconciled?**

- The achievement of many objectives depends on staff undertaking the necessary curriculum development, marketing, liaison with employers etc. Whereas in the past, time for such activities might have been provided through 'remission' from teaching, with the advent of new contracts, such activities are now absorbed into the definition of a normal workload. Because directors and deputy directors carry relatively high teaching loads, and main grade lecturers can be co-ordinating five or more courses without reduced class contact, there is very little time left from the day to day running of provision, to undertake 'product development'.
- We have invested considerable energy in devising and introducing a workloading system for staff on new contracts. Our aims were to:
  - recognise, explicitly, the full range of lecturers' duties
  - provide equity in workloads carried by different members of staff, through a weighting system (numbers of students, among of assessment required, etc)
  - define a reasonable workload and thereby put a ceiling on what can be asked of an individual

See *Section 9.Resources*

Staff attitudes

The attitudes of staff can determine whether or not an objective is achieved. Some staff may feel that implementing new developments is not the most important aspect of their job. This is particularly difficult when resources are tight and it is not possible to give material encouragement or rewards to those willing to undertake new responsibilities.

8.8 **Are staff attitudes assisting or undermining the implementation of objectives?**

For example

- **is low morale blocking change?**
- **were steps taken to ensure that staff understand the context in which the college is operating?**
- **were staff involved in planning, decision making and in setting the objectives?**

- The middle- management training programme has meant that middle managers are aware of all the strategic issues that SMT have to deal with

- Whatever staff feel about the causes of drop out they realise that they need to do something about it, because of the stark realities of funding. With redundancies on the cards they know that jobs depend on improving retention rates, as well as enrolments. Staff may still feel that students drop out because of their financial and social circumstances, and that there is not much that they can do. However, they recognise that they must do what they can.
- The deputy principal had a session with staff in each programme area where he used graphs to show them the financial consequences to the college of losing students, both within a single year, and over two years of a programme.
- A working group has recently been set up to look at the whole 'student journey', to see where policies are missing and need to be written, and where staff development is needed. There is a need to get more people to share 'the vision'
- We did have a say in how the move was conducted, use of the building etc. It is important to be consulted at a sufficiently early stage; i.e. before decisions are made, rather than after. Sometimes we don't have enough information in order to be able to contribute to decisions
- All the staff shared the overarching objective of improving the programme for students. However, not all staff accepted the manner in which the objective was implemented.
- Staff did not receive the news of the new course with enthusiasm. The speed with which matters moved forward after the appointment, and the time of year, meant that there had been little opportunity for discussion prior to staff receiving letters informing them that they would be teaching on the new course.
- The review showed that staff who had been given a part to play in the development of the plan were more committed to the targets and action identified in it. The provision of information to teams by the head of corporate planning, on the growth potential of different market segments. had been welcomed

8.9 **Is there a culture of analysis and problem solving or a tendency to respond by apportioning blame?**

- There is a tendency to interpret review in terms of apportioning blame, rather than objective analysis of shared problems. This may need to be addressed through staff development. As staff become more involved in review and self-evaluation it may be possible to shift the focus of attention to an analysis of the root cause, in an atmosphere of trust and support, away from blame
- There was a supportive and constructive atmosphere in the college, and a confidence that problems could and would be solved. There was little evidence of factionalism, distrust, blaming, or negativity, (although there was some feeling that things that suit one campus might not be as appropriate for their own). Factors that seemed to contribute to this included:
  - the provision of information for staff; for example, briefings by SMT on the FEFC funding methodology
  - open communication channels: (being able to have one's 'say'). There are regular timetabled faculty and divisional meetings. Staff are able to put items on the agendas of meetings and feel confident of getting a response. Faculty campus contacts provide a channel for contributing to and commenting on central college systems

- the use of a regular review process; for example, review of objectives with line managers; review of central admissions system by the registry team and faculty campus contacts
- Clear lines for consulting, reporting and decision making; for example, the registry team prepares a review paper. This is discussed by the faculty campus contacts for admissions, who make recommendations to the curriculum committee of the academic board

See Section 3 Shared Values

8.10 **Are staff enthusiastic about or resistant to change?**

- Some staff are resistant to change. They will try and fit new initiatives into the old familiar ways of doing things, and hence stifle developments.

8.11 **Is territorialism by some groups of staff undermining progress towards the achievement of objectives by the college as a whole.**

- Resourcing decisions are difficult. Faculty Directors see bids for more staff from the Central Admissions Service as a threat to their own budgets, not to mention their autonomy.
- All staff were informed of the plan to create a Business Consultant post. Some divisional managers were strongly opposed to this increase in 'non academic' posts

See *Section 4 Structure*

8.12 **Was the implementation of objectives affected by unstable staffing arrangements?**

For example

- **restructuring**
- **redundancy and early retirement**
- **high staff turnover**

- There is considerable personal uncertainty, resulting from recent and on-going re-organisations. One post-holder only arrived in September, two are acting in post and one job has been significantly changed through the recent management re-organisation. Further changes are likely
- The only way to cope is to have effective systems and stable support staff; i.e. long term as well as sane!

REMEMBER
THE ONLY WAY TO COPE IS TO HAVE EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS AND STABLE SUPPORT STAFF, I.E. long term as well as sane!
WELL, I'VE BEEN HERE FOR AGES..... BUT AM I SANE?

'The only way to cope is to have ... stable support staff'

For new initiatives to take root, it is usually advantageous to prepare the ground first, through staff development. Resource constraints have led some colleges to cut back on staff development and hence investment in `product development'. The absorption of such activities into a lecturer's general worload with the introduction of new contracts represents a considerable culture shift for many..

- Staff development has to take place in your own time. Remission is not provided, although classes may be covered to allow attendance at a course, if this is agreed to be necessary/unavoidable.

8.13 **Were the staff development implications of the objectives analysed as part of the strategic plan?**

For example

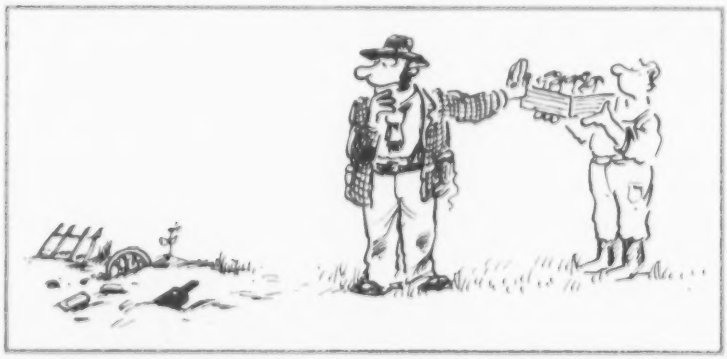
- **skills shortages and mismatches**
- **necessity for culture change**
- **provision of information**
- **updating**

- Staffing has been a major problem. There are some shortages of specific skills. Staff available have not necessarily had the right skills/knowledge profile. We are looking at internal redeployment, supported by targeted staff development investment.
- Before we can make further progress on implementing the quality assurance process, we need to provide opportunities for staff to explore the issues and concepts involved.

For example, :

- consideration of the question, Who is quality assurance for? Some members of staff apparently assumed that the purpose of quality processes is to satisfy outsiders (for example, the FEFC) rather than to improve the service to students by improving college procedures or one's own professional performance
- realisation that the questions/indicators/targets are not necessarily imposed from outside. Instead, it is important to be clear about what the college is aiming to do, and to frame questions (indicators, targets) to check the extent to which the college is achieving it's aims, and to identify aspects it needs to improve on.

- The principles guiding the quality audit process stated that a student would be included in each audit team. This did not occur with the first audit, and some curriculum directors have expressed apprehension about the inclusion of students and 'junior staff' on the audit team. If this principle is to be enacted, it will be necessary to do some work to prepare the ground.



It's important to prepare the ground thoroughly before planting out the seedlings

- Before a caseloading system could be introduced it would be necessary to provide staff development for teams on ways of deploying course hours, and staff time. At the moment they tend to assume that anything perceived as 'extra' to actual teaching, has to be done in a lecturer's 'own time'; i.e. non-class-contact time.

8.14 Was there an effective staff development plan?

For example

- **needs analysed and prioritised?**
- **effective strategies for delivery?**
- **part-time and support staff involved?**
- **responsibilities clearly allocated?**
- **dissemination of experience to others in the organisation?**

- At the beginning of the spring term, classes were closed so that all teaching staff could participate in an event to familiarise them with the admissions process, and the full range of programmes offered by the college (recently created out of the merger of four colleges). Following the briefing session, staff worked in groups which cut across faculties and sites, on the basis of alphabetical order of names. They used the prospectus to find the most appropriate programmes for a series of case study students.
  The purpose of the session was to break down a staff tendency to be partisan towards the programmes offered by their own faculties, or to refer students to the courses with which they were familiar, usually at their own site. The event involved 300 members of staff. Feedback was extremely positive and resulted in several constructive recommendations, as well as a step forward towards a real sense of being one college.
- The Quality Assurance Co-ordinator attended a two day course, but some of the lessons learned on the course may not have been communicated to or taken on by the people who drafted the Quality section of the plan, and the Quality Assurance Process for the college

8.15 Were sufficient resources allocated to staff development?

Were these resources deployed to good effect?

- The contracts dispute has led to a general lack of enthusiasm. 'Remission' is being absorbed into the normal workload of staff, but poor morale means that staff are unwilling to take on `extra' work on a 'voluntary' basis. Funds earmarked for staff development are not being used to provide staff with time to undertake development work.
- There was a tendency to be cautious when setting objectives due to a lack of confidence regarding the availability of the necessary time and resources to implement more ambitious objectives. The situation has improved now that a budget for staff development has been earmarked, with an element devolved to each Head of Department.

It is not only a *lack* of resources which can undermine or block the effective implementation of college objectives. Factors relating to resources can affect the achievement of objectives in a variety of ways.

For example

- unrealistic costing of developments
- failure to earmark resources for the implementation of the strategy
- reliance on 'opportunistic' funding to implement developments rather than allocation of revenue funding; for example, bids for development funds
- loss of revenue due to inadequate MIS or lack of commitment by staff to capturing the information necessary to substantiate claims

Conversely, it is not only the *availability* of resources that supports the achievement of objectives. Although spending power is an obvious advantage, the way in which even limited resources are used is also significant. Internal resource allocation systems can be used to drive or reinforce the implementation of objectives.

For example

- top slice and buy back in return for implementing developments
- incentives and rewards for achieving or exceeding targets
- performance managed pay

As colleges know only too well, a shortage of resources can have far reaching consequences.

For example,

- lack of investment in `product' development
- high ALF resulting in uncompetitive prices and consequent loss of training contracts
- cutting staff posts, resulting in limits on the time of remaining staff to undertake developments
- inability to invest in new equipment to increase efficiency, or to upgrade facilities in order to increase recruitment and retention rates

Colleges need to make decisions that will limit the damage caused by a lack of resources, and arrest the downward spiral.

The culture change associated with the disappearance of the traditional currency for recognising curriculum development and other non-teaching activities by lecturers (remission from class contact) with the introduction of new contracts, is creating a difficult context for implementing new developments in some colleges.

Key issues

Costing implementation

A lack of costing or identification of resource requirements for the implementation of objectives was identified as a weakness in college strategic plans by the Audit Office, in its 1995 report, *Managing to be Independent*.

9.1 **Were the practical implications of implementing each objective thought through, so that realistic costings could be made?**

- The decision to create a new post — business development manager — had been costed but associated resourcing issues had been overlooked. For example, clerical support, hardware and software, travel budget, location of the post-holder.
- Detailed costings in terms of time and money, have not been included in the strategic plan or operating statement as these are public documents. In many cases, they are also difficult to quantify precisely.

9.2 **Were resources earmarked for the implementation of objectives?**

- Suggestions for new provision appeared in the prospectus, but resources were not allocated to undertake the necessary research, curriculum and staff development. Staff would welcome involvement in detailed planning so that they could make sure that implementation plans are realistic, and will work to best effect in all curriculum areas.
- Implementation of the objective to improve retention rates was constrained by a lack of resources on several fronts:
  - development of the mentoring project
  - development of support materials for records of achievement
  - staff time to support admissions
  - staff time for basic skills support
  - further improvements to physical support infrastructure (childcare, open learning support)
  - computerisation/MIS improvements to free up staff time from administration.

Allocating resources for implementation

Implementation of objectives can, of course, be affected by a lack of resources. A lack of confidence that resources will be available for implementation also limits the scope of developments at the planning stage.

9.3 **Were staff confident that if their proposals were included in the strategic plan, the resources to implement them would be forthcoming?**

- Staff are wary about putting forward ideas for exploration and consideration. They are afraid they will be taken up and put in the prospectus, as a commitment to delivery, without a commitment of the necessary resources; for example, time to make adequate preparations.
- There was some feeling that some aspects of the plan were less forcefully implemented than others. The allocation of resources did not seem to tie up tightly with the planning process. A new, more

formal bidding system is being introduced which may ease these worries.

9.4 **Is the college claiming all the funds it is entitled to?**

Is the MIS capable of ensuring that all resources owing to the college can be claimed and that all claims can be substantiated for audit purposes?

Is the MIS operating efficiently to make accurate claims?

Are staff committed to capturing all the information necessary to enable the college to make accurate claims?

- There were doubts across the college about the validity and accuracy of some of the information on recruitment and retention which was emerging from the college's MIS. The college was participating in the FEFC ISR pilot and had experienced difficulties with some of the software provided. It was not possible to establish how far the information was genuinely inaccurate and the college may be losing funds as a result.
- Members of SMT took a funding methodology 'roadshow' to all campuses and all departments, to ensure that staff fully understood the implications. They went through worked examples, showing the financial implications to the college of failing to meet recruitment targets, and of losing students during the course.
- The college is committed to relieving the admin. burden currently borne by course managers. However, despite this commitment, there are no signs of the resources becoming available for the purchase of the necessary hardware and for staff training.

9.5 **Were resources guaranteed from revenue funding earmarked to support the implementation of objectives? Or was implementation dependent on successful bids for development funds, or on funds from less dependable sources?**

- The college has a very high ALF and is therefore facing rapid reductions in its unit of funding in the next few years. This means that there will need to be matching unit cost savings — not necessarily a problem in itself, but leaving little room for major internal investment in new initiatives. College plans for resourcing many of the action points arising from the retention project therefore rely on external sources of funding rather than internal revenue funding. In the light of the crash of the local TEC (not known at the time of the first visit), it now appears that the funding is inherently less reliable as a basis for planning than FEFC revenue income.
- The college has demonstrated a willingness to support key strategic initiatives through central provision of resources, guaranteed from revenue funding rather than relying on external grants. This has proved true for open learning, and guidance and counselling, to support the strategy for growth, and has been helped by the FEFC funding methodology, which explicitly recognises the costs of the entry phase and rewards student retention.
- Despite good intentions, progress on implementing modularisation ground to a halt when the TEC funding came to an end.

Resourcing strategies

Although spending power is an obvious advatnage, the way in which even limited resources are used is also significant. Internal resourcing strategies can be used to drive or reinforce the implementation of objectives. The adverse effects of resource constraints need to be weighed carefully, so that strategies for damage limitation can be formulated.

9.6 **Are resources being deployed in such a way as to reinforce the achievement of objectives?**

For example

- **budgets of FEFC units delegated to teams on the basis of business plans**
- **caseloading**
- **investment in project teams (staff time and expenses)**
- **performance managed pay**

- One issue arising at CMT reviews has been the need for some HoDs to recognise that not growing was not an option. Some pressures have been brought to bear, through linking a reduction in consumable funding to failure to grow but as resources are finite, care has to be taken that those achieving growth are suitably rewarded, in order not to cause demotivation.
- The college resource allocation process is strongly driven from the top, on the basis of agreed targets. As an example, resources to fund the development of open learning centres were top-sliced from programme area budgets, with a proportion being returned only if the programme area participated in open learning activities.
- The area has an incentive to recruit over the targets if it can. The college operates a zero-based budgeting system linked to the targets, and the programme areas know that marginal funding can be gained if they 'over-recruit'.
- The college has a system of resource allocation to areas, based on the achievement of growth targets in the strategic plan, measured at the end of the recruitment period (i.e. after any initial switching and dropping out has taken place). College-wide initiatives have been supported with strong resource allocations to those areas, by top-slicing from programme area budgets, leaving programme areas no choice but to fall in line with the strategy.
- The processes of developing operational plans for the programme areas are well-integrated with a new system of 'Performance Managed Pay', which sets individual and group targets, against which additional bonus pay can be earned. This creates a strong reinforcement, in systems terms, for the strategic objectives.
- Our budget strategies will force staff and SMT colleagues to conform in the end...

9.7 **If resourcing strategies are being used to drive the implementation of objectives, is a check being kept on possible adverse side effects?**

For example

- **acceptance of students on to courses in order to achieve targets, rather than recommending a more suitable course in another part of the college**
- **destructive tension (as opposed to 'creative'), between 'providers' and service staff**

- A strong budget-setting process for programme areas in the college is closely linked to the achievement of strategic plan targets, and reinforced by a system of 'performance-managed pay' which rewards individuals for exceptional achievement in any of their agreed areas of responsibility. However, this does not seem to have an adverse impact on student guidance. There is no advantage to the college if the student is on the wrong course. The impact on the area budget, of very small numbers of students switching provision, is so marginal as to make no practical difference.
- Resourcing strategies encourage staff who are involved in recruitment to recruit to their own areas - they are rewarded financially for this and not penalised for subsequent drop-out after 1 November, the date on which the area budget is set. If Guidance moves students before this date, this creates tensions.

9.8 **Were the spiral effects of the lack of resources on different aspects of the college considered, so that informed decisions could be made?**

For example

- **weighing short term expediency with longer term effects**
- **damage limitation**
- **knock-on effects**

- The constraint of lack of money for training, and the already stretched nature of the service provided by front line staff, are likely to be the determining factors in shaping the customer care programme which will commence in February 1995.
- The admissions and learning resources manager was unable to make progress with several objectives because SMT had not had time to make the necessary decisions. Their attention was preoccupied by the current restructuring, brought about by the need to make significant efficiency gains.
- We have been restructuring the admissions service. Unfortunately, however, this coincided with a short fall in targets and the need to cut the budget, so a lot of time was lost waiting to see if the new structure could be implemented. As a result, new staff will not be in post until late in the peak enrolment period.
- Candidates for the post of business development manager were interviewed but, after the first day of the selection process, a decision was made not to appoint, owing to the small number of suitable candidates. The intention was to re-advertise the post immediately, but because growth targets had not been achieved at that point, this post, and that of community development manager were frozen.
- The college's high ALF, combined with a legacy of over staffing, forced it to make radical savings. Included amongst the casualties were the Staff Development Officer, and the staff development budget.
- The college is not well resourced. There is no money available to offer incentives for staff or to cover the costs of work-based assessment.

9.9 **Is a lack of staff time adversely affecting the achievement of objectives?**

How can this be managed, in the context of the introduction of new contracts for teaching staff?

- The time available for implementing new developments and initiatives is inevitably restricted by the fact that:
- Directors teach 11-12 hours per week with averaging; deputy directors teach 16 hours per week; programme co-ordinators are main grade lecturers and may be managing more than five courses as well as a full teaching load. This inevitably restricts the time available for implementing new developments and initiatives. Is it realistic to expect them to undertake the necessary curriculum development, external links, etc. as well? Failure to invest in product development is likely to have long term consequences for the college.
- Difficulties are anticipated in developing records of achievement because of the lack of resources. The development of tutorial materials has been held up because of a lack of time to do it. Research into good practice in other colleges will also not get done because of lack of time.
- You can't put much pressure on faculty campus contacts for the personal tutor system, or make demands, because they don't get much remission.
- The lack of resources is being cited in the argument from some staff about the recommendations. Their argument is that they cannot improve retention rates without putting in more time and therefore they need to be given remission from teaching duties. This directly conflicts with the resourcing pressures created by convergence in this high ALF college. Additional remission for tutors, across the board, would have a major cost impact on the college's budget.

See *Section 8 Staff*

The key questions from the previous sections have been collated and presented here as pro formas. These can be used by teams and groups for the purposes of discussion, self-assessment and action planning.

For example

- reviewing implementation of objectives in the current plan
- consideration of the full range of factors that may have affected progress, using the 7S Framework
- identification of reasons for failure or success in implementing particular objectives
- diagnosis of problems, trouble-shooting, unblocking
- self-assessment — are we strong on some aspects of the 7Ss and weak on others?
- discussion and identification of strategies for next time round

	No ← → Yes	Notes	Action
1 The production of the plan			
1.1 Is the plan • a coherent strategic plan for the college as a whole? *or* • a collection of separate plans,produced by individual faculties, departments, programme areas?			
1.2 Were the objectives set by individual faculties, departments or programme areas, informed by the strategic objectives of the college as a whole? *or* Were the objectives generated by individual faculties, departments or programme areas, added together and 'moderated' to form a strategic plan for the college?			
1.3 Was the interplay between objectives considered? *For example* • the knock on effects of GNVQ expansion on A-level group sizes • the effects of the objectives of one faculty or programme area on those of another			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
1.4 Did the plan signal all the significant developments which occurred or did some major changes come about which were not included in the plan? What were the reasons for this?			
1.5 Is the plan seen as: • an agreed schedule for action over a specified period, against which progress can be measured? *or* • a 'live' and evolving document, which will be continuously revised and augmented in the light of reviews and in response to changing circumstances?			
1.6 Were long term or complex objectives: • analysed into sub-objectives or action points? • broken down into stages? • phased?			
1.7 Were there too many or too few objectives included in the plan? Was the level of detail appropriate?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
1.8 Was the plan expressed in terms of: • general directions for development For example investigate... develop... enhance... or • specific destinations *For example* increase of eight per cent establish a...			
1.9 Did the objectives state a commitment to achieving progress and change? Or did they describe the status quo? *For example* continue to provide			
1.10 Did the plan represent the college's response to the outcomes of the market analysis, environmental scanning and research? Or was it based on history and assumptions?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
1.11 Were base-lines for implementing objectives in different parts of the college established, as the starting point for drawing up action plans? *For example* • audit of current practice in different parts of the college • audits of staff expertise, hardware available etc.			
1.12 Do the outcomes of reviews inform the development of new objectives? Have timing issues been resolved in order to make this possible?			
1.13 Did the plan address appropriate time frames? *For example* • focused too exclusively on immediate year ahead • longer planning horizon needed for accommodation strategy (5-10 years?)			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
1.14 Did the strategic planning process undermine the development of shared values in the college? *For example* • failure to involve some groups of staff • consultation which did not result in subsequent modifications, amendments, or additions to the plan • inclusion in the plan of suggestions which were put forward as drafts, for discussion purposes, only • failure to analyse what was involved, and to support the implementation of the objective with a commitment to provide the necessary resources and staff development			
1.15 To what extent were staff involved in the planning process? *For example* • heads of sections • programme area leaders • team leaders • members of teams • staff as individuals or through representatives • cross-college co-ordinators • cross-college teams • support staff groups			
1.16 Were cross-college co-ordinators involved in the consideration of objectives and targets?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
1.17 Were support staff and teams involved in the planning process?			
1.18 To what extent do staff feel: • 'ownership' of the plan? • committed to achieving the objectives? • personal responsibility for achieving(or contributing to the achievement of) specific objectives *For example do they have personal action plans?*			
1.19 What support has been provided for staff to enable them to participate effectively in the strategic planning process? For example • frameworks for market analysis • provision of information • time for teams to undertake reviews • clarity about the status of ideas put forward • support (for example, resources, staff development) for the implementation of proposals			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
1.20 Were the plan and operating statements expressed and set out in such a way, as to provide a useful tool for managing, monitoring and reviewing implementation? *For example* ● objectives broken down into component sub-objectives or action points ● realistic target dates specified ● responsibility/accountability for implementation allocated to a named individual, post-holder or team ● format, layout, cross references, etc.			
1.21 Were responsibilities for sub-objectives allocated sensibly, in terms of the way in which the college operates? *For example* ● systems, organisational structures, geography			
1.22 Were arrangements for co-ordination in place?			
1.23 Were the implications for implementation built into the plan? *For example* ● resource requirements ● staffing and staff development requirements ● responsibilities clearly allocated ● target dates			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
2 Managing, monitoring and reviewing implementation			
2.1 Is the plan seen as: ● a reference for managers and staff to co-ordinate progress towards specified objectives within stated timescales? ● an annual event? ● a dynamic ongoing process rather than a finished product? *For example,* ● Monitoring progress is as likely to result in modifications to the objectives as it is to revisions of the strategies for achieving them			
2.2 Have responsibility and accountability for each objective in the strategic plan and operating statement been clearly allocated, so that progress can be monitored? *For example* ● to individuals ● individual staff action plans ● related to performance bonuses ● to teams/groups/committees Do staff feel accountable for particular objectives? Do members of staff have individual action plans? Do individuals and teams use the plan as a reference for their own work?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
2.3 How are objectives which straddle organisational boundaries, monitored and reviewed?			
2.4 How frequently is progress in implementing the plan (one year plan/operating statements) monitored? *For example* weekly fortnightly monthly termly annually			
2.5 Does monitoring take place: • on a regular basis? *For example* • as a standing agenda item • at identified meetings • on an ad hoc irregular basis? *For example* • in response to events • only when it becomes obvious that the ship is miles off course and about to run aground • it varies from one part of the college to another.			

00

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
2.6 Do the outcomes of reviews inform the development of subsequent plans?			
2.7 Who is involved in monitoring progress towards the achievement of objectives? Does monitoring take place: • through existing college structures and ongoing processes? *For example* • meetings of academic board committees • team meetings • line management meetings through special groups convened for the purpose? *For example* • project teams created to implement particular objectives • a committee of the academic board • at special meetings *For example* • faculty meetings			
2.8 Does anyone have oversight of the outcomes of monitoring?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
2.9 What are the mechanisms for reporting and reviewing the outcomes of monitoring? *For example* ● HoD reports presented at SMT meetings ● minutes of meetings to AP Curriculum ● Is there a standard reporting schedule? ● format, key headings ● cycle of dates			
2.10 Who is involved in reviewing the plan?(three year plan and one year plan) *For example* ● college organisational structures, including support staff ● college consultative structures ● cross-college co-ordinators ● cross-college teams and groups ● students ● other stakeholders *For example* • parents, employers, community groups governors trade unions			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
2.11 Are standard reporting schedules used for review? *i.e..* ● agreed format/process ● common key questions ● cycle of dates			
2.12 Is the college making the best use of monitoring and review processes? *For example* ● for developing skills and confidence in strategic planning ● for developing and reinforcing `shared values' amongst staff ● for gaining staff ownership of and commitment to the college objectives ● as part of the college quality assurance process Could the processes for monitoring and review be improved?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
3 Shared values			
3.1 Are there signs that shared values at the college are supporting the implementation of objectives in the strategic plan? *For example, is there evidence of:* ● a shared vision? ● a climate of trust? ● positive assumptions about the ways in which colleagues will interpret events, make decisions, react and behave? ● confidence to express opinions and ideas? ● openness about problems, and confidence that shared solutions can be found? ● a constructive attitude to change?			
3.2 Has a lack of shared values affected progress in the implementation of some objectives?			
3.3 Have conflicting interpretations of problems led to difficulties in agreeing what action is required? *For example* ● reasons for drop-out by students			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
3.4 Have differing constructs led to strategies that will not work equally in all parts of the college? *For example,* ● concepts of the tutorial role ● concepts of APL			
3.5 Have differing concepts of functions led to allocations of responsibilities, delineation of roles, the creation of systems and organisational structures which do not work? *For example,* ● concepts of marketing			
3.6 Is there evidence of: ● suspicion about the motives and intentions of others? ● a lack of confidence, inclination or interest in expressing opinions and ideas? ● a tendency to hide problems or to blame others, rather than to share in responsibility for finding workable solutions?			

	No ⟷ Yes	Notes	Action
3.7 Is the college operating in a way which fosters the development of shared values, and an appropriate culture? *For example* ● well oiled communication channels ● access to information ● structures and systems that enable staff to: interact with colleagues in other departments and sites interact with senior managers understand the points of view of other groups of staff contribute to the design of processes and systems participate in regular reviews and problem-solving activities ● establishment of common frameworks for activities across departmental or site boundaries			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
4 Structure			
4.1 Are there gaps in the college organisational structure and infrastructure which are affecting implementation of the college's objectives? *For example* ● GNVQ co-ordinator ● link between Marketing and Admissions Units ● link between the Admissions Unit and faculties regarding APL procedures ● responsibility for monitoring performance and delivery on a college charter undertaking			
4.2 Is the existing structure working with or against planned college developments? *For example,* ● GNVQs call for a team approach; they cut across traditional subject boundaries, and core skills should be assessed in vocational contexts. Many sixth form colleges are organised in small subject-based departments, with little tradition of course delivery by teams			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
4.3 Are there mechanisms which enable staff on different axes of the organisational structure to work in partnership, collaborate and understand each others' points of view? *For example* ● 'live matrix' through dual roles ● committees, projects, task groups, support groups for staff working on similar tasks ● 'timetabled' meetings ● faculty or campus liaison roles			
4.4 Have functions been analysed and understood, so that roles can be delineated and allocated appropriately? *For example* ● APL ● Marketing			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
4.5 Has the implementation of some objectives been affected by factors relating to the delineation and allocation of roles within the organisational structure? *For example* ● ambiguity about the nature of the role inappropriate location of the role within the organisational structure For example, no contact with the right people ● uncertainty about the boundaries of the role in relation to other roles ● unclear reporting lines ● inappropriate level; for example, lack of `clout'			
4.6 Is there an appropriate balance between `providers' and `services'?			

	No ← → Yes	Notes	Action
4.7 In order to play their part in implementing objectives effectively, do 'cross-college' and service staff have: ● sufficient power? *For example,* • level of seniority of co-ordinators and managers ● effective communication channels? *For example,* • with teaching staff in departments • membership of decision making groups? *For example,* ● SMT, academic board			
4.8 Are mechanisms in place for cross-college staff to contribute to the formulation and review of the strategic plan?			
4.9 In large, multi-sited colleges, have structures been established which assist the effective implementation of objectives?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
5 Systems			
5.1 How successful is the college in establishing and operating effective systems? When named systems were introduced (for example, recording student progress and achievement) did the college ensure: ● involvement of the staff who will operate the system, in the design of the system? ● a clear understanding, amongst staff, of why the system was needed? ● opportunities for staff to explore the use of the system before it was introduced? *For example,* ● staff development to practise necessary skills ● opportunities for all users to comment on the system, review its operation and suggest modifications? (Were these opportunities planned, or a reaction to problems when they arose?) ● ongoing monitoring of the operation of the system ongoing support for the staff responsible?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
5.2 Did the college invest sufficient resources in the introduction and co-ordination/management and operation of the system? *For example* ● level of seniority of staff, calibre ● staff time ● hardware/software			
5.3 In order to make full use of the energy expended in establishing and operating systems, has the college succeeded in ensuring the related systems mesh together efficiently? *For example* ● co-ordinating quality review and planning processes ● setting the parameters for bids for curriculum development project resources, at the same time as setting college objectives Are review systems used for the purposes of: ● analysing problems? ● drawing up strategies? ● monitoring implementation of objectives?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
5.4 Are there examples of systems that have been successfully introduced at the college? What were the factors which assisted this process? *For example* ● creation of task groups comprising representatives of all user groups, to design and steer the introduction of new systems ● creation of common frameworks, with some flexibility for adaptation, for use by staff in different parts of the college *For example* ● different kinds of students ● different kinds of 'subject' ● different location of campuses ● the culture of different sites adoption of meetings calendars to ensure that groups of staff are able to meet regularly. ● clear communication and reporting systems *For example* ● minutes of meetings going to a named senior manager who can respond quickly, if necessary. ● piloting of new systems with pre-set dates for evaluation and review.			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
5.5 Have problems related to systems resulted in blockages to the effective implementation of the strategic plan? *For example* ● inefficient or inadequate systems *For example* MIS ● a lack of ownership in and commitment to the system by staff and other users *For example* lack of staff development insufficient involvement of staff in designing and reviewing the system ● poor communicators in key positions ● gaps in systems ● the fact that the purpose and operation of the system have not been fully thought through ● the fact that a single system will not suit all parts of the college *For example* in different departments on different sites ● lack of contact between people with similar or inter-locking roles			

	No ← → Yes	Notes	Action
6 Style			
6.1 What kinds of style are operating at the college? What characterises the approaches of: ● the senior management team to the introduction of changes? *For example* • belief that sharing information is dangerous or empowering • cautious or adventurous • paternalistic, maternalistic. • dictatorial or consultative • the principal, to suggestions or requests from staff? • staff, to requests for information, or the introduction of new systems?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
6.2 What are the origins of the dominating style(s) at the college? *For example* • personal style of the principal? • history, tradition, culture, shared values? (the way we've always done things around here) • structures, • systems? • some influential individuals? • conscious efforts to establish a particular approach *For example* time spent formulating and reinforcing college values statement Investors in People (IIP) Process Re-engineering			
6.3 Is the current style productive, or counter productive? *For example* • characteristic approaches of managers • characteristic approaches of middle managers • characteristic attitudes of staff Does the current style need to be changed or strengthened?			
6.4 What factors are undermining the beneficial effects of the desired style? *For example* • lack of time to consult			

	No ◄ ► Yes	Notes	Action
6.5 Is the style consistent? Are there conflicting styles in operation? *For example* ● dislocation of styles amongst members of SMT, and between SMT and middle managers ● conflicting expectations of behaviour and interpretation of events by managers and staff Is it necessary to maintain a consistent style amongst SMT members? Is there room for flexibility? Are styles complementary? Is it possible to maintain a consistent style in the face of challenging circumstances? *For example* ● budget short falls ● staff redundancies Can any style be effective, provided it is consistent? Is consistency undermined, as strategies are filtered through different layers of staff, and the varying styles of individuals? Is the dominant style in steady state, developing, or undergoing change? *For example* ● in transition from x to y.			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
7 Strategy			
7.1 In order to achieve a particular objective, has there been a detailed analysis of the action that will be required?			
7.2 In working towards the achievement of a particular objective, were the various component sub-objectives sequenced and co-ordinated effectively?			
7.3 Were action points prioritised, so that visible progress could be made?			
7.4 Was there general agreement about the underlying causes of a problem, and about the action that would therefore be required? *For example* • consensus amongst members of SMT agreement between SMT and staff • consensus amongst different groups of staff			
7.5 Were workable and imaginative strategies formulated, which made use of the tools to hand, and which took account of the 6's and 1 R framework?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
7.6 Were strategies legitimised and reinforced by linking them with other developments in the college? for example, the College Charter, FEFC inspection			
7.7 Did the strategy address the need for culture change, where this was a factor?			
7.8 Were baselines established before strategies for action were planned? *For example* • by means of an audit of current practice in different parts of the college to identify gaps where further development was needed.			
7.9 Were existing pockets of developments, relevant to the objective, identified, recognised, brought together and built on? for example, use of CAL. flexible learning, progress on modularisation?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
8 Staff			
8.1 Were the staffing implications of each objective thought through? Were problems created by reliance on: *For example* • staff with insufficient authority to lead on implementation? • co-ordinators with limited access to consultative and decision making structures? • staff without the necessary qualities? *For example* • poor communicators who don't see the necessity of passing on information • lack of experience appointment of 'external' specialists (for example, marketing, personnel, accountancy) without a planned induction to the FE sector?			
8.2 Has implementation of objectives been affected by a failure to involve part-time staff in: *For example* • planning • staff development • meetings • quality assurance processes?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
8.3 Has implementation of objectives been affected by a failure to involve support staff in: *For example* • planning • staff development • meetings • quality assurance processes?			
8.4 Are resource constraints leading to a loss of motivation by staff?			
8.5 Were limitations placed on what could be achieved, by responding to resource constraints with false economies? *For example* • making internal appointments, to avoid adding to the payroll, instead of advertising externally for people with the right skills and bringing experience from elsewhere • appointing staff who are too junior and inexperienced to execute the role effectively • creating a point-five post when there is a whole job to be done • insufficient posts			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
8.6 Are pressures on staff time affecting the implementation of objectives? Are some members of staff so overloaded that they cannot fulfil all aspects of their role adequately, and have little or no time left to implement new initiatives?			
8.7 How can conflicting perceptions about reasonable workloads be reconciled?			
8.8 Are staff attitudes assisting or undermining the implementation of objectives? *For example* • is low morale blocking change? • were steps taken to ensure that staff understand the context in which the college is operating? • were staff involved in planning, decision making and in setting the objectives?			
8.9 Is there a culture of analysis and problem solving? Or a tendency to respond by apportioning blame?			
8.10 Are staff enthusiastic about or resistant to change?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
8.11 Is territorialism by some groups of staff undermining progress towards the achievement of objectives by the college as a whole?			
8.12 Was the implementation of objectives affected by unstable staffing arrangements? *For example* • restructuring • redundancy and early retirement • high staff turnover			
8.13 Were the staff development implications of implementing the objectives analysed as part of the strategic plan? *For example* • skills shortages and mismatches • necessity for culture change • provision of information • updating			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
8.14 Was there an effective staff development plan? *For example* • needs analysed and prioritised? • effective strategies for delivery? • part-time and support staff involved? • responsibilities clearly allocated? • dissemination of experience to others in the organisation?			
8.15 Were sufficient resources allocated to staff development? Were these resources deployed to good effect?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
9 Resources			
9.1 Were the practical implications of implementing each objective thought through, so that realistic costings could be made?			
9.2 Were resources earmarked for the implementation of objectives?			
9.3 Were staff confident that if their proposals were included in the strategic plan, the resources to implement them would be forthcoming?			
9.4 Is the college claiming all the funds it is entitled to? Is the MIS capable of ensuring that all resources owing to the college can be claimed and that all claims can be substantiated for audit purposes? Is the MIS operating efficiently to make accurate claims? Are staff committed to capturing all the information necessary to enable the college to make accurate claims?			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
9.5 Were resources guaranteed from revenue funding earmarked to support the implementation of objectives? Or was implementation dependent on successful bids for development funds, or on funds from less dependable sources?			
9.6 Are resources being deployed in such a way as to reinforce the achievement of objectives? *For example* • budgets of FEFC units delegated to teams on the basis of business plans • caseloading • investment in project teams (staff time and expenses) • performance related pay.			
9.7 If resourcing strategies are being used to drive the implementation of objectives, is a check being kept on possible adverse side effects? *For example* • acceptance of students on to courses in order to achieve targets, rather than recommending a more suitable course in another part of the college. • destructive tension (as opposed to "creative"), between 'providers' and service staff.			

	No ◄——► Yes	Notes	Action
9.8 Were the spiral effects of the lack of resources on different aspects of the college considered, so that informed decisions could be made? *For example* • weighing short term expediency with longer term effects • damage limitation • knock-on effects			
9.9 Is a lack of staff time adversely affecting the achievement of objectives? How can this be managed, in the context of the introduction of new contracts for teaching staff?			

Appendix 1: Information about the project colleges

Information about the project colleges and their objectives

PROJECT COLLEGES	Objectives and aspects of the implementation process chosen for tracking purposes
Medium size general further education college. Four sites within a two- mile radius. Suburban. Low ALF	▪ Monitor operation of the charter, including the complaints procedure. ▪ Embed an understanding of and commitment to marketing across the college through a professional development programme
Large tertiary college. Fifth largest college in England. Three main sites, plus a number of smaller sites following a merger of all local post-16 providers. Town with strong industrial tradition, now in decline. Has introduced Performance Managed pay. Average ALF.	▪ Achieving specified growth targets, overall, and in terms of particular target groups; the marketing process ▪ The development and implementation of a marketing plan to support the growth targets
Small multi-site tertiary college. Semi-rural. Low ALF	▪ Incorporate new technologies into teaching and learning and develop initiatives to extend their use in resource-based learning and open learning as well as in mainstream provision ▪ Seek to obtain the highest possible grades from FEFC inspections
Small general further education college. Single site. Town with rural catchment area. Low ALF	▪ Incorporate the new post of Business Development Manager, aimed at specific product marketing (particularly NVQ and income generating consultancy and short courses) ▪ The college wishes to develop an action framework which ensures that the strategic plan is active rather than static. This will incorporate periodic review, modification in the light of events, identification of whole and partial achievements, local action plan and necessary college action against revised targets

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Medium-to-large sixth-form college. Average ALF (relatively low compared to other sixth form colleges)	▪ To provide a broad general education for full-time students and within this framework, create individual programmes to meet the specific needs and aspirations of them all ▪ To support certified courses with a programme of pastoral care, careers, education, personal and social education and extra curricular activities ▪ Specific operational objective: to prepare a programme of courses to deliver A-level General Studies
Medium size sixth-form college. Single site. Rural. Specialises in provision of an academic education for 16-19 year old students, most of whom progress to HE. Average ALF	▪ Further development of the quality review and assurance process • refinement of quality *review* procedures • implementation of quality *audit* process for cross-college activities ▪ Interface between the review process and planning
Medium size general further education College. Two sites. Metropolitan borough. Highly competitive post-16 environment. Average ALF	▪ Integration of Art and Design, and Performing Arts curriculum to form Visual and Performing Arts, located in a new purpose built block ▪ Opening of a new commercial salon in Hair and Beauty to provide a 'Real Working Environment' and hopefully to increase client numbers, and so income ▪ Communication/Involvement. To what extent do staff feel involvement in the strategic objectives set out in the college Strategic Plan?
Large general further education college, operating on eleven main sites, formed out of the merger of three colleges in 1992. Inner City. High ALF.	▪ Improve student retention rates

Large general further education college, established in 1985 by amalgamating four separate colleges, spread across an area of fifteen or sixteen miles. The college includes a tertiary centre and previously separate colleges of technology, art and design, and agriculture and horticulture. Operates on six main sites.	To recognise the college as a learning support system through efficient and effective student services: to develop the effectiveness of the Admissions Centre to develop and implement a college-wide personal tutor system
Medium sized general further education college. One main site and four smaller centres. Inner City. Low ALF	The introduction of APL (use APL for students progressing through the NVQ route) The strategic planning process

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following colleges who took part in Project 854: Implementation of College Strategic Plans, and the Effects on Practice ..

Barnsley College
Carmarthenshire College of Technology and Art
Godalming College
Hendon College
Lambeth College
Nelson and Colne College
North Tyneside College
Salisbury College
South Birmingham College
Worcester Sixth Form College

We are grateful to Brunel College for additional case-study material.

FEDA Project Team

Sue Carroll	**(Project Director)**
Sue Brownlow	(Consultant)
Rosemary Moorse	(Consultant)
Sue Taylor	(Consultant)
Doreen Barker	(Word processing)

- *College Strategic Plans 1995-6 and Beyond* FEFC(E) 95/02, February 1995.
- *Institutional Planning 1995* - Further Education Funding Council for Wales bulletin, Ref. B94/03, February 1995
- *Managing to be Independent: Management and Financial Control at Colleges in the Further Education Sector.* Report by The National Audit Office. HMSO. January 1995
- *The 7-S Framework (Structure is Not Organisation)* by Robert Waterman Jr, Thomas Peters, and Julian Phillips, *Business Horizons*, Foundation for the School of Business at Indiana University, June 1980.
- *Strategic Planning Handbook*, FEU/The Staff College, 1994.
- *Extending the Vocational Curriculum in Sixth Form Colleges* Part One: Analysis and Commentary; Part Two: An Aid to Planning, FEU 1995.
- *External Institutions' Strategic Plans* 1995-96 to 1997-98. FEFC(E) 95/03, January 1995.

Implementing College Strategic Plans

- summarises the factors that were found to have assisted or obstructed the implementation of strategic plans in ten colleges in England and Wales 1994-5
- uses an adapted version of the 7S model of organisational change to categorise the factors under the following headings:

Strategy

Structure

Systems

Style

Shared Values

Staff (including Skills)

Resources

- presents the factors in the form of key questions for the purposes of self assessment, discussion, review and action planning
- provides illustrations from the experiences of the ten colleges as food for thought and a source of ideas
- includes a summary of the key questions in the form of pro formas, for the purposes of review and action planning by other colleges